

The forensic, the missing and the memorial: How missing persons of apartheid state sanctioned violence are memorialised through the mediation of the work of the forensic.



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Key Words: Apartheid era missing persons, Freedom Park, //hapo museum, virtual exhibition, memorialisation, forensic, *forensis*, exhumed artifacts, cemetery-museum.

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Magister Artium in the Department of Historical Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of the Western Cape.

Plagiarism Declaration

I, Nicola Ann Pretorius, understand what plagiarism is. I declare that all work presented by me for this work, and every aspect of my mini-thesis will be my own and where I have made use of another's work, all sources have been acknowledge by complete references.

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10 December 2024.

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Abstract

This mini-thesis is concerned with a text panel titled, 'THE MISSING' and a display cabinet that contains exhumed artefacts recovered alongside human remains of persons categorised as missing on exhibit at the //hapo museum at Freedom Park Heritage Site, located in Pretoria, South Africa. The question this mini-thesis asks is how missing persons of apartheid are memorialised at //hapo museum. It is through an analysis of this memorialisation, that the forensic emerges in two distinct ways, first as a category and then as part of the practice of exhumation. In exploring these notions, I critically examine the category "missing" as it has been presented at //hapo and the work of the forensic in relation to the work of memorialisation efforts.

The position of the text panel (within //hapo) requires a disruption of time, a looking back and it is only through this looking back and turn to the past that 'THE MISSING' text panel is seen. In chapter 1, I examine the //hapo museum and how it sits within the larger post apartheid museum moment. I suggest thinking of the text panel through the exhibitory practice of the "dilemma label". It is through exploring the inscribed accounts of the text panel that the forensic emerges, which is the work of Chapter 2. I also suggest that through *forensis*, that the text panel is a forum (of field and forum). I cast the text panel as forum as it is a public space where the results of the investigation (the field) is then presented, mediated and potentially contested. In chapter 3, I do an exhumation (of sorts) of the cabinet displays at //hapo museum that contain exhumed artefacts recovered alongside human remains of persons categorised as missing. I argue that the text panel at //hapo is headed by 'THE MISSING' which then resides alongside a set of cabinets display which contain the exhumed artefacts are a memorialisation effort by Freedom Park and the //hapo museum curators. The 'museum-cemetery' is both concept and category, which creates a practice but also a space that re-figures the dead within that dynamic space and within political and historiographical charged ways. It is a dynamic political space for the dead to be made/unmade and through which their death can be processed and reconfigured. I make use of this concept and category to understand the text panel and the display cabinets together as a single 'museum – cemetery.' It is through positioning the display cabinets as a coffin and the text panel as a gravestone, that this connection can be made clear. The 'museum-cemetery' confines but also potentially remakes the afterlives of the artefacts. In a way this dynamic political and historical making and unmaking of the artefacts, also works to both rest and unrest the missing persons of apartheid, disrupting their afterlives but in an attempt to memorialise them.

Acknowledgements

This mini-thesis would not be possible without the support of so many individuals. The order of the following does not indicate any hierarchy in assistance received, every bit of the help has made the world of difference.

To my supervisor, Dr. Riedwaan Moosage I say many thanks. This work would not be possible without your guidance throughout my post graduate career. Without your intervention this work would look a lot different and for the worse. Your critiques have been course corrections more than shutdowns which has allowed this work to come to be the best version of itself and, in a way, the best version of myself.

This mini-thesis was made possible thanks to the W. Mellon Foundation. Support was given through the Turning the Tide: Consolidating an Academic Pipeline for Staff to Advance Career Pathways at South African Universities programme.

To the Forensic History and Visual History reading groups, the many Fridays afternoon we spent together has inspired many tangents and redirections in my thinking. This experience has been hampered by the lockdown, and with our zoom meeting, connections were made that brightened the whole experience.

My thanks and gratitude belong to all at the Department of Historical Studies, but in particular Prof. Ciraj Rassool I have to shout out. Thank you for all the opportunities that you have given me and thank you for all guidance you have provided me.

To my parents, Gary Pretorius; Anneke Pretorius and Yvonne Stanbridge Pretorius, thank you for the patience and care you have poured into me, so that I could pour into this mini-thesis.

Everything I do is to make you proud, and I hope this does. This journey to Freedom Park has only been possible through our visits to Pretoria, so Anneke thank you.

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Introduction

Freedom Park was not very busy, when I made my initial visit. In fact, our group of 4 was the only visitors within eyeline the entire day. It is very rare to have such space and time to move through places with no other people. The impact of Coronavirus (COVID-19) public regulations were still in effect, like that of social distancing and face masking. Freedom Park Heritage Site itself has several elements; the *Isivivane* is a symbolic resting place for the spirits of those people who died in the struggle for humanity and freedom. This element is named after the Nguni word that means “heaps of stones”, which is reflected by the several large boulders and tress that are symbolically at rest through this element. There is also the *S'khumbuto* which includes the Wall of Names; a sanctuary for religious (or just quiet) contemplation and the Gallery of Leaders (commemorating several South African and international leaders as well as its use as an event space). This is based on a siSwati word that means memorial or place of remembrance which is characteristic of this element which has several segments of remembrance in honour of those who have come before. *Mveledzo* is the foot path that leads to the *//hapo* exhibit, that is based on a Tshivenda word meaning success and progress. The *//hapo* museum is an interpretive museum on the site of Freedom Park heritage site. The name is Khoi in origin meaning “dream” and comes from the phrase “*//hapo ge //hapo tam a /haohas ib dis tamas ka I bo* [a dream is not a dream until it is shared by the whole community]”.¹ It is the *//hapo* museum and select elements of exhibition display that is of focus in this research, a text panel and set of display cabinet drawers.

¹ Taken from the *//hapo* museum website, <https://360sa.co.za/virtualtour/freedom-park-hapo-57/>. Accessed on 1 October 2023.

In this mini-thesis I aim to explore the text panel, 'THE MISSING', as it is concerned with the missing persons of apartheid. The question this mini-thesis seeks to ask is how missing persons of apartheid are memorialised at //hapo museum. It is through an analysis of this memorialisation, that the forensic emerges in two distinct ways, first as a category and then as part of the practice of exhumation. In exploring these notions, I want to be critical of the category "missing" as it has been presented at //hapo. This text panel is part of the history narrative that is being presented at //hapo. Producing the event of history through the museum must also account for its virtual presence. In the case of //hapo there is an oversight in between the physical location and the online simulation. I also think through a text panel alongside the exhibitory practice of a dilemma label. This is very useful in thinking about the past, the past as presented by //hapo and how there is friction in that production. In fact, there is friction in how the virtual tour and the physical site of //hapo are presented which is at best a possible weakness or at worst deliberate oversight. I argue that the text panel at //hapo is headed by 'THE MISSING' which then resides alongside a set of cabinets display which contain the exhumed artefacts are a memorialisation effort by Freedom Park and the //hapo museum creators.

Freedom Park is a beautiful place designed to reflect on the difficult past that has shaped the southern most regions of Africa. It deliberately does not bound the narratives and hard fought freedom to the nation of South Africa but the region at large connecting South Africa to the African continent. The Park site resides on Salvokop and sits opposite the Voortrekker monument (the site and symbol of Afrikaner identity and nationalism). The political lens through which collective memory has been constructed must be noted, as collective or social identity of the nation can negatively impact upon the healing of victims (those who sacrificed or were

victims in pursuit of freedom for the collective freedom of all) as well as further marginalise those who have been marginalised already by focusing on Heroes of the nation and Heroes of the struggle for liberation as figureheads rather than complex individuals.

Memorials have become a way of re-claiming an oppressed or marginalised history as well as re-constructing social identities, however the complexity of (human) memory means that it is often in conflict with the recorded history. The transitional justice procedures or process works with several legal forums at various levels (national or international), that aim to establish the facts and evidence about human rights abuses of past administrations. Out of transitional justice procedures, memorialisation occurred to attempt to preserve the memory of the missing persons of apartheid, but these attempts can instead spotlight the violations that resulted in their disappearances.² Freedom Park is a site of symbolic reparations.

The United Nations has the Basic Principles for reparation, which identifies broad modes of reparations as restitution, rehabilitation, assurance of non-repetition of harm and lastly satisfaction.³ Symbolic Reparations does not have a fixed definition but can take a variety of forms such as renaming public spaces, the construction of museums (Freedom Park), processes of physical memorialisation, public apology and atonement as well as the establishment of commemorative events – the common thread through all these modes is the explicit aim of carrying (specific) meaning and narratives. Symbolic reparations can have relating uses such as ritualising and providing closure, it can restore the relationship between victims and the state,

² Susanne Karstedt, "The Emotion Dynamics of Transitional Justice: An Emotion Sharing Perspective," *Emotion Review* 8, no. 1 (2015), 50

³ Kris Brown, "Commemoration as Symbolic Reparation: New Narratives or Spaces of Conflict?," *Springer Science and Business Media Dordrecht* 14 (July 2013), 275.

and furthermore it can redirect blame towards the perpetrators and relieve the moral ambiguity that survivors feel; which can all ultimately lead to improved chances of reconciliation.⁴

Freedom Park is a ceremonial and symbolic memorial site that is allied to histories of apartheid-era missing persons.

The site of Freedom Park has five main principles which have been designated as the emancipation of African voices, ubuntu, indigenous knowledge, storytelling and the African Diaspora. These five principles were chosen deliberately in order to uplift the African voices that had been actively repressed in the past and to ensure the voice(s) of the communities in South Africa are heard. Thus, the indigenous voices and knowledge were to take centre stage in the creation and execution, with the goal to amplify those voices previously silenced but also to provide knowledge and narratives that challenged the prejudices and myths that western notions of Africa, which dominated the way Africa was represented outside of the continent. The pillars of emancipation of African voices and the African diaspora, explored being African and what it meant to be African in the wider global understanding and the biases of what that had implied within this larger global context, especially due to the violence of colonialism. This approach re-established being African as a positive identity and emphasized the existing and indigenous values and knowledge systems from the continent. This notion seems to be one that is important to not only Freedom Park but also to the larger production of memorials and heritage making in the post apartheid South Africa.⁵

⁴ Brown, "Commemoration as Symbolic Reparation," 275.

⁵ Siphso Mdanda, "The emancipation of the African voice in the curation of the//hapo exhibition at Freedom Park," *South African Museums Association Bulletin* 36, no. 1 (2013), 14.

The past has already occurred, and events have transpired but the significance of these events and interpretation of these events cannot be set, rather ‘the past’ is re-evaluated by each subsequent generation, who then decide what is the implication of aspects of the past. In a similar manner the intended interpretations, meaning and values of the museum which have been curated and created through the design of the museum cannot be perfectly produced to all museum visitors. There is variation upon which the interpreted and translated meaning(s) of the past will only exponentially grow with time. Collective memory is consequential for commemorative forms and practices and, according to Martin Murray, “have always been deeply invested in the shaping of political and national identities.”⁶ Sabine Marschall puts forward that in South Africa, structures are intentionally commemorative and that after apartheid many monuments follow the trend that of refining established older structures to fit into the new established social past, “filling of the old forms with new content.”⁷ Following the example of the TRC, the African National Congress (ANC) government decided against destroying old symbols of apartheid beliefs like that of the Voortrekker monument. The government instead decided to create new symbols as well as reinterpret the old symbols of apartheid into the post apartheid narrative.⁸ The bedrock of (new) national South African identity is rested on the antithesis of the past (apartheid) government’s ideologies and that, this sentiment of anti-apartheid ethos is important to the transition of government commemorative practices (from 1994 onwards). It was a strategy in which to build a collective past in order to build a new national identity in opposition to the fractured politics of the identities of the past. A different

⁶ Cassandra Mark-Thiesen, Moritz Mihatsch, and Michelle Sikes, "Public Memorialisation and the Politics of Historical Memory in Africa," in *The Politics of Historical Memory and Commemoration in Africa* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2021), 4.

⁷ Sabine Marschall, “Transforming the Landscape of Memory,” *South African Historical Journal* 55 (2006), 178.

⁸ Mdanda, Siphon. "Social cohesion versus coercion: How Freedom Park seeks to unite South Africans through inclusive nationalism." *South African Museums Association Bulletin* 35, no. 1 (2012), 8.

strategy for creating new national identity is built on the dead of a nation. A new national identity built upon the dead of the nation's past which is a practice that has been implemented since after World War 1.

The Imperial War Graves Commission, which was later renamed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), had been concerned with marking, recording and maintaining the graves of those fallen soldiers from both the World Wars.⁹ This commission has been concerned with identifying and finding the missing soldiers of the World Wars, particularly those of World War 1. There are many forensic anthropologists and forensic archaeologists that have worked to identify these missing fallen soldiers. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was concerned with searching for those buried in unmarked graves, battlefields and trenches – especially across Europe. The CWGC was also concerned with creation and maintenance of memorials for the fallen soldiers under their mandate. The protocols of the World Wars meant that many soldiers were buried where they had died, which in turn meant they are many mass graves and or missing records that pertain to the soldier's deaths.¹⁰

There are many ways that these individual soldiers were and continue to be missing; their graves could be unknown or part of a larger mass grave or the soldiers could be missing from official record which obscures their identification. Further complicating the work of the CWGC is that DNA is a large identifier for the missing soldiers which has been complicated by time, over 100 years have passed since the end of World War 1, and distance, relatives may be on other

⁹ Nicholas Marquez-Grant et al., "Searching for the missing soldier: Identifying casualties from the First World War," *Metode Science Studies Journal* 10 (2020): 99.

¹⁰ Marquez-Grant et al, "Searching for Missing soldiers," 99.

continents and their human remains of the missing may be across Europe. So, in the case of World War 1, the missing cannot be separated from the dead, especially as it has, currently, been over a century. Hence, the missing soldiers of World War 1 have been defined by the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission as well as with memorialisation, with creating and maintaining thousands of memorials dedicated to the fallen dead and missing soldiers globally.¹¹ This practice creates a memorial complex that can be identified through its ties to the nation and to a national memorial.

Richard Werbner argues that the memorial complex at its most fundamental is about the dead of a nation and the presence of their absence.¹² The memorial complex is deeply tied to World War 1 and the massive scale in which there were deaths that impacted those nationwide in the public sphere. People died in very large numbers for the 'greater collective good' which then meant a responsibility from the collective (left behind) to honour the sacrifice in a collective public memory. It is through the public memorialisation of these dead, that people of a nation can identify with *their* dead. For this reason, there is a large part of identity that is formed through national memorial complexes.¹³ Therefore, the memorial complex is a practice that is used to build legacy and identity especially regarding the nation.

¹¹ Claire Horton, "Commonwealth War Graves Commission," accessed October 11, 2021, https://www.hmoob.in/wiki/Commonwealth_War_Grave_Commission.

¹² Richard P. Werbner, "Smoke from the Barrel of a Gun: Memory, Postwars of the Dead, and Reinscription in Zimbabwe.," in *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology and the Critique of Power*, ed. Richard Werbner (London: Zed Books, 1998), 72.

¹³ Ciraj Rassool, "Human Remains, the Disciplines of the Dead, and the South African Memorial Complex," in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructure* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 140.

The memorial complex at Freedom Park differs from those seen in other places such as Heroes Acre. The Heroes Acre in Zimbabwe is a burial ground for those fallen heroes of the nation, whereas Freedom Park is not a burial site nor cemetery despite being, as I suggest, a memorial to the dead.¹⁴ Ciraj Rassool argues that Freedom Park's memorial complex comes through the presence of indigenous methods, with the concern placed in the symbolic return of freedom fighters.¹⁵ Here the presence of the absence of remains transform the missing persons of apartheid into ancestors of the nation. The new method of the memorial complex has been created at Freedom Park through the commemoration of the dead and missing but through methods which place interpretation and translation through indigenous knowledge keepers and with emphasis on spirit and symbolic repatriation over the physical cemetery or grave.¹⁶

The existence of Freedom Park is not without controversy, as it has conceptual inspiration from President Thabo Mbeki's "I am Arican" speak, given in 1996 (when he was Deputy President at the time, which itself has been controversial. As Sabine Marschall points out, "let us recall that the Freedom Park concept was crucially informed by Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech, which has generated much critical debate, especially with respect to the question of who might be considered an African."¹⁷ There has been contestation about who is and is not allowed to be commemorated and inscribed upon the Wall of Names, an element of Freedom Park. The Wall

¹⁴ See Shepherd Mpfu, "Making heroes, (un)making the nation?: ZANU-PF's imaginations of the Heroes' Acre, heroes and construction of identity in Zimbabwe from 2000 to 2015," *African Identities* 15, no. 1 (2016), 67-72, doi:10.1080/14725843.2016.1175920 and Shepherd Mpfu, "Participation, citizen journalism and the contestations of identity and national symbols: A case of Zimbabwe's national heroes and the Heroes' Acre," *African Journalism Studies* 37, no. 3 (2016), 91 -93.

¹⁵ Ciraj Rassool, "Human Remains, the Disciplines of the Dead, and the South African Memorial Complex," in *The Politics of Heritage in Africa: Economies, Histories, and Infrastructure*, edited by Derek R. Peterson, Kodzo Gavua and Ciraj Rassool (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 144.

¹⁶ Rassool, "Human Remains," 145.

¹⁷ Sabine Marschall, "7. Freedom Park as National Site of Identification," in *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative monuments, memorials and public statuary in post-apartheid South Africa* (Leiden: BRILL, 2009), 223.

of Names was focused on those who died fighting for freedom across the eight conflicts that shaped South Africa.¹⁸ There has been protest relating to the exclusion of certain soldiers, as soldiers who are oppressors of freedom, like the South African Defence Force soldiers have not been commemorated as “freedom fighters” despite fighting as South African citizens. The creators of Freedom Park did make the decision to include 2000 Cuban soldiers who fought and died in Angola against SWAPO on the Wall of Names, despite not having a South African identity. The South African Defence Force soldiers who died in the same conflict are not inscribed which caused protest from people like the author Pieter Labuschagne for being anti-inclusive.¹⁹ The decision made by Freedom Park in this regard is tied to the anti-apartheid principle and those who fought in that pursuit. The inclusion of the pro-apartheid soldiers and the salute of their sacrifice would be difficult to reconcile in the same memorial that celebrated those soldiers who died on the opposite side of the same conflict and by these same pro-apartheid hands. The exclusion of the South African Defence Forces soldiers from the Wall of Names has not been without contestation for being anti-inclusive. Freedom Park despite that has positioned itself as a place that is ardent for holding space for dialogue concerning the past.

It is often that Freedom Park is the space that the handing over of the remains of missing persons takes place. Families and loved ones gather at the site to receive their loved ones remains from the Missing Persons Task Team, a unit set up on recommendation from the TRC to locate, exhume and identify apartheid era victims of enforced disappearance. The Park continues to hold

¹⁸ The wall of Names organises the names inscribed names under the conflict in which the individual lost their life. These conflicts are the Pre-Colonial Wars, Slavery, Genocide, Wars of Resistance, the South African War and War of Resistance, World War 1 and 2 and lastly the struggle for Liberation.

¹⁹ Peter Labuschagne, "Monuments and meaning making: Freedom Park and the bumpy road to reconciliation and nation-building in South Africa," *South African Journal for Contemporary History*, 37 no. 1 (June/July 2012), 159.

space for dialogue and conferences concerning disappeared persons, from South Africa's political past and in connection to an international crisis of enforced disappearances.²⁰ There is also ongoing engagement with families of forcibly disappeared, as Freedom Park has been a place for symbolic repatriation, cleansing and symbolic burial for affected families. For example, most recently it was the families of four forcibly disappeared who were symbolically repatriated joining together the missing persons of apartheid and Freedom Park location.²¹ The contestation of memory and the past is recognizable in the Wall of Names but not strictly confined to it. Through memorialisation initiatives complicated people and their legacies are often simplified in order to easier create a national narrative. In essence many people, events and movements are made to be uncomplicated in the aftermath of conflicts. In the case of South Africa with reconciliation and unity as paramount building blocks of the new South Africa's memorial bedrock at Freedom Park, this can materialise, but it is combated by Freedom Parks' initiatives. There are active campaigns like the international day of the disappeared, which attempts to tell layered histories of those disappeared persons whose legacies are not to be forgotten nor lost.

Chapter outline

In this first chapter "Missing at the Memorial", I aim to investigate the //hapo museum at Freedom Park and how it sits within the larger museum sphere in post apartheid South Africa. In

²⁰ "The International Day of the Disappeared seeks to remember and honour those who have disappeared, but more importantly to share the knowledge of the long struggle of families affected by enforced disappearances through commemorating the day with the Mamelodi Mothers of the Disappeared." See "Stay Informed," Freedom Park - Heritage Site & Museum, last modified September 22, 2023, <https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/stay-informed>.

²¹ The Department of Justice, Freedom Park, City of Tshwane, More tele Local Municipality, City of Tshwane Military Veterans Unit, Department of Military Veterans, Department of Sport, Arts and Culture and the South African Heritage Resources Agency will host the spiritual repatriation of the four deceased victims from Kgomo-kgomo, Mmukubiyane and Cyferskuil. The four were Samuel Ledwaba, Matthews Lerutla, Jeffrey Sibiya and Oupa Mohale. All four were from Mamelodi township in the City of Tshwane. Super User, "The Spiritual Repatriation, Cleansing and Symbolic Burial of Four Mamelodi Activists at Freedom Park," Freedom Park - Heritage Site & Museum, last modified August 3, 2023, <https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/stay-informed/742-the-spiritual-repatriation-cleansing-and-symbolic-burial-of-four-mamelodi-activists-at-freedom-park>.

exploring the //hapo museum, I explore how Freedom Park has contended with the past. There is a virtual tour of the //hapo museum, and the virtual 360 tour is a helpful tool in exploring the //hapo from anywhere or at any time. It is through the virtual tour alongside my lived experience of the //hapo, that an analysis of the potential and pitfalls of the //hapo museum will be explored. In investigating the museum production, I think through a text panel alongside the exhibitory practice of a dilemma label.

In the second chapter, “Categorising the Missing,” of this mini-thesis, the text panel concerning ‘THE MISSING’ is investigated. The text panel is situated within the sixth epoch of the //hapo museum. The text panel is concerned with the missing persons of apartheid, and through the chapter “Categorising the Missing”, there is an investigation into this classification. The //hapo museum memorialised the disappeared of apartheid in a particular way, and this chapter aims to highlight the mediations of the forensic which resulted in this account. This is done through an assessment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as an exploration of international investigations of post conflict procedures that have been influenced by the Latin American forensic turn and exhumation. The text panel can be missed if one walks through of the //hapo, if one is not diligently careful. There is a requirement to look back and turn in reverse in order to see the text panel. In exploring the forensic (turn), the practice of *forensis* emerges and it will be deployed in order to think through the text panel as a forum requiring mediation at //hapo museum.

In the third chapter, “Exhumation on Display?”, I aim to exhume the display cabinet and their contents for you, my reader. These display cabinet drawers contain donated exhumed artefacts,

that once lay alongside and amongst the human remains of several individuals who have since been exhumed by the Missing Persons Task Team. These exhumed artefacts are not presented nor visible on the 360 virtual tour and requires mediation and representation in ways the other displays at //hapo (for example the text panel of 'THE MISSING') do not. This exhumation is conducted through following standard exhumation procedure, which starts with the preliminary analysis of research; followed by the excavation of the site and exhumation, (which consists of opening up the earth, bringing into light what had laid hidden). In this case of the excavation and exhumation of the contents of the display cabinets at the //hapo site is exploring what the contents of the cabinets are. The last phase of exhumation practice, which is an analysis, is concerned with taking the information and making sense of what it contains, which is what I aim to do with analysing the contents of the display cabinets drawers. The 'museum-cemetery' is both concept and category, which creates a practice but also a space that re-figures the dead within that dynamic space and within political and historiographical charged ways. It is a dynamic political space for the dead to be made/ unmade and through which their death can be processed and reconfigured. I make use of this concept and category to understand the text panel and the display cabinets together as a single 'museum – cemetery.' It is through positioning the display cabinets as a coffin and the text panel as a gravestone, that this connection can be made clear. The museum-cemetery confines but also potentially remakes the afterlives of the artefacts. In becoming a museum -cemetery for the exhumed artefacts, the missing persons of apartheid are memorialised in ways that disrupt their rest in order to remember and thus in order to memorialise them. The layout design of the text panel and the cabinet display speaks to the uncomfortable and delicate work of memorialising the missing persons of the apartheid era. The geographical placement of the text panel, in terms of the wider exhibit design, is less awkwardly

placed when connected to the cabinet display, the exhumed artefacts and understanding them as coffin and gravestone. However, I argue that the effectiveness of the display in the cabinets relies on the emotional impact of the exhumed materials which is hampered by the closed cabinet displays.

Chapter 1: Missing at the memorial

The //hapo museum is both quiet and noisy as our group walks along the path of the museum on the 2nd of April 2022. It is eerie as we are the only visitors that we see other than the people working at the reception desk and the gift shop. Despite that, is not a quiet space as there are many voices playing through speakers alongside displays throughout the museum. At each display there are frequently multiple information videos playing to the museum visitor. These videos are multimedia presentations that replay on loop, frequently playing oral historical accounts of past moments and events in a range of displays and or academic experts speaking on the relevant display. The voices of both the academic expert and those who lived through history are showcased, highlighting a key vision of Freedom Park. This vision is to collaborate with local knowledge leaders alongside the academic expert rather than the expert over local knowledge makers and keepers.²² The displays vary in stature, from animated projections to two story tall metal sculptures. The artifacts on display do not have museum labels of identification. The lighting through most of the museum is dim creating an intimate atmosphere.

In what follows I will explore the //hapo museum. In the first section I investigate how the //hapo museum site presents itself and situate the //hapo among the wider museum moment that occurred in the post apartheid. In the second section, I walk with you, my reader, through the //hapo museum site, which is greatly aided by visual references from the virtual 360 tour available on Freedom Park's website. In the third section, I think through a text panel alongside the exhibitory practice of a dilemma label. This is very useful in thinking about the past, the past

²² Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley, and Ciraj Rassool, "Chapter Nine: Heritage and the post anti-apartheid," in *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 231 -233.

as presented by //hapo and how there is friction in that production. In fact, there is friction in how the virtual tour and the physical site of //hapo are presented which is at best a possible weakness or at worst deliberate oversight.

The //hapo museum is one element of several elements that constitute Freedom Park. The //hapo forms part of a larger trend of museums in South Africa that aim to remedy the narratives of the past, and curate new stories, particularly of apartheid, through a new lens. Kicked off in 2003, the Freedom Park Trust selected had initially considered international options to develop the project but instead chose to work with several local architecture firms to head the creation and completion of the //hapo museum. The building phase was completed in 2010, but the museum was officially opened by then Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe on 22 April 2013. The //hapo is a museum as it is designated as such by Freedom Park. It had been created to counter a more traditional concept of the museum, with (South) African knowledge systems mediated by the historically colonial institution. Museums all over the world have historically been inspired by the European model and therefore their (museums) histories need to be addressed to rectify these problems, practices and understandings. Due to the inadequate nature of the western museum model, there have been practices that transform the museum as the needs of the museum change over time. This is because the western style museums are heavily associated with colonialism, oppression, loss of heritage and life for indigenous community.²³

²³ Moira Simpson, "Revealing and Concealing: Museums, Objects, and the Transmission of Knowledge in Aboriginal Australia," in *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Marstine (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 153.

The curator at Freedom Park, Siphso Mdanda, argues against the outdated system of museum authority, which upheld the curator's authority over local knowledge keepers. Instead, Mdanda advocates for the celebration of the contributions of local knowledge and communities which held equal authority in the narratives presented at //hapo. Likewise, he continues, the museum narratives themselves must be adaptable as they have the responsibilities of national heritage on their shoulders.²⁴ The production of the knowledge on display at Freedom Park is thus different than that of the historical western institution that dominated in the past.

Museums emerged out of anthropological and ethnographic practices, that were deeply linked to colonialism, not in a distant parallel of colonialism, but an active agent in the activities of colonialism. The classification systems that are so iconic of the ethnographic museum emerge out of the ethnographic work of anthropology.²⁵ The presence of anthropologists in locations outside of Europe was directly because of the colonial project. Museums were places of exhibition to showcase the 'otherness' of many communities who were not European. The presence of colonial settler in non- European places, was aggressive and the continued project of colonisation was enforced by centuries of brutal oppression.²⁶ Therefore, I would argue that the mere presence of anthropologists and their ethnographic work is steeped in violence.²⁷ There was a specific type of dynamic created, one where the European oppressor dictated what became the dominant cultural norms and thus 'othered' the knowledge and traditions of the oppressed

²⁴ Mdanda, "The emancipation of African voice," 14.

²⁵ Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp and Chris Wingfield, "A "Safe Space" to Debate Colonial Legacy," *Museum Worlds* 7, no. 1 (2019): 2.

²⁶ Zetterstrom-Sharp and Wingfield, "A Safe Space," 2.

²⁷ Shahid Vawda, "Museums and the Epistemology of Injustice: From Colonialism to Decoloniality," *Museum International* 71, no. 1-2 (2019): 72-75.

colonised community.²⁸ It is through these practices that many museological practices and categories emerged that became the standard practices of museum across the globe in the 20th century.

This was actively countered by the //hapo museum as an institution steeped in collective local knowledge as well as a push for collective ownership of that knowledge. Thus, the notion of collective ownership of knowledge counters the power dynamic in which the authority lies either with the academy or with the curator, when outside of the academic boundary. This sentiment falls in line with a collective national past pushed in the post apartheid which included cultural diversity that allowed all South Africans to feel tied to the larger nation's heritage.²⁹ Public history is intertwined with the heritage sector. There were many projects from professional historians to showcase and educate the general public on the past. The aim of such projects was to take the knowledge accumulated through the academy and turn it into information that the public could absorb and understand. So, history was then given to the general public in digestible forms like a funny illustrated comic strip for example. In South Africa, it has been put forward by Witz et al. that public history and heritage truly emerged from projects after apartheid that were nation-building projects.³⁰ Therefore, the aims of the project were for many people within the public to identify with heritage sites and projects, even if they did not have a personal connection to that project or heritage site. Therefore, public history has a very specific place and practice within South Africa.³¹

²⁸ Vawda, "Museums of Injustice," 77.

²⁹ Leslie Witz, *Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 23.

³⁰ Witz et al., "Chapter Nine: Heritage and the post anti-apartheid," 228 -230.

³¹ Leslie Witz, Gary Minkley, and Ciraj Rassool, "Chapter 9," in *Unsettled History: Making South African Public Pasts* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 231.

The museum in South Africa had to massively change because there was a global shift towards transformations in the 1990s but also very locally there was a huge shift in culture in South Africa which required reshaping and rethinking of many museum spaces. Leslie Witz points out that the museums were embraced rather than shunned in post apartheid South Africa. The museums before this museum moment, identified by Witz, were exclusionary of most South African experiences and were often filled with displays and exhibits that reflected ideas of white supremacy and apartheid ideals. In this museum moment, old established and newly created museums readdressed and rejected these ideals of the past that glorified apartheid past and cast the events of the past into a new light.³²

Witz argues that there is an underlying contradiction in these museum productions, which are trying to contain and curate and essentially bind time to the past whilst also being a site of challenge and contestation of history.³³ This contradiction is unavoidable, as binding narratives to the past is key to the museum. Museums are also forums of contestation and for reshaping histories of the past which is fraught with friction. As Witz argues “more than anything, the museum became the site of ‘history frictions’ in the post-apartheid South Africa.”³⁴ The past is to be interpreted and conveyed in new times but bound in the time before, with friction over past events as it often was counter to the dominant ideologies of the apartheid era. In the post apartheid time, the past was being reconfigured and new knowledge produced and gate keepers of knowledge, as museums, needed both de- and re- construction according to this new order and

³² Leslie Witz, *Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 2-4.

³³ Witz, *Museum Times*, 2.

³⁴ Witz, *Museum Times*, 2.

this museum moment. In other words, “South African museums were occupied with similar issues, but they emerged at a time of heightened intensity as the pressures to construct altered institutional selves coincided with a post-apartheid remaking of pasts as reconstituting a nationalized citizenry through government commissions, memorial making, tourist narratives and forms of heritage production.”³⁵

Witz’s thinking around time and the event enables a deeper thinking of the contradiction of museums. He points out how the institution of the museum, its constituent forms of mediated knowledge production in this museum moment of a post apartheid South Africa, can unveil the contradiction of museums in South Africa. He argues that “ this excessive production took place through a contradiction that lies at the very heart of museums: an institution that is manifestly concerned with the conservation and management of time into a space of and for the past is simultaneously the site of contesting, changing and reshaping history.”³⁶ Witz highlights this through an exploration of his own personal involvement with academia (and University of the Western Cape on the one hand) and museums. This contradiction is that the museum is an institution of conservation of the past but also is a site for contesting and reshaping the past, thus there is a contradiction at play with the museum as the site for containing and managing the production of the past at a museum site but also challenging the narratives of past events.

³⁵ Witz, *Museum Times*, 4.

³⁶ Witz, *Museum Times*, 2.

Time has passed, the events of history has occurred and history of a nation of South Africa has changed in the post apartheid. In many old and new museums events and time has needed to be reconstructed in order to create a new collective past. The event of history has to be produced, and the past designed though establishing documentary existence which organizes time into events of the past and thus of history. Producing an event of history through the museum must also account for its virtual presence.³⁷

In the technological age we live, most physical museum sites have an online presence, be it a social media page across several platforms, a dedicated website or a virtual exhibitions or whole virtual tours of its grounds. For Werner Schweibenz, “a virtual tour (also called a panoramic tour) is a simulation of a place that exists, usually consisting of a collection of panoramic photos, a collection of images connected by hyperlinks, or videos, and or a virtual model of the actual location.”³⁸ The global outbreak of the COVID19 Pandemic pushed forward the scope of the imagination and need for safe site visits resulted in the heightened push of internet clicking traffic to internet websites like those of museums and as Schweibenz points out, “the combination of hypertext and multimedia was thought to provide much easier access to cultural information and a user friendly interface because museums are highly visual media.”³⁹ The

³⁷ Premesh Lalu describes the event of history as a temporal signifier, in which the event marks a difference which can be seen as the progression or transformation of liner time. This is discussed by Leslie Witz in book as he thinks through museum time. See Leslie Witz, *Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022).

³⁸ Werner Schweibenz, "The virtual museum: an overview of its origins, concepts, and terminology," *The Museum Review* 4, no. 1 (August 2019): 10.

³⁹ Schweibenz, "The virtual museum," 13.

proposal for a digital presence or e-museums, electronic museum had been discussed at the earliest the 1960s. It became technologically possible in the 1990s.

The rapid growth of the internet and the ability to access and make use of the internet led to users sharing information. Often images of the museum exist outside of the ownership or control of an official institution, in this case the museum. The readily available access to a camera and to sharing photographs across the internet, especially social media, has led to museum imagery to be shared and accessible. This accessibility is not one the museum as institution can control, it is not illegal to share the experience of museum visits and thus imagery of the museum becomes accessible. The physical limitations of regulations pertaining to collection conservation or limitations of site space are not bound in the alternative virtual realm which allows for interpretations of the past to become more accessible to a wider array of people and more often than the one site visit and entrance fee.⁴⁰

Freedom Park has an official virtual tour of their museum, a 360 virtual view. In a drop-down tab accessible on their main website, <https://www.freedompark.co.za/> is a tab labelled the virtual tour. Clicking upon the link, immediately moves one onto the virtual tour webpage, with a click and drag mouse movement instruction; you are at inside entrance or foyer of the //hapo museum as you would be in the 'real world start'. It is accessible online and is accessible for free. It's available on their official website and easy enough to navigate. One moves though the epochs of

⁴⁰ Marisol Lopez-Menendez, "Online Martyrs: Virtual Tours of the Miguel Agustín Pro Museum, and the José Simeón Cañas Central American University Martyrs," *Religions* 10, no. 9 (2019):1.

the museum (as I discuss below), as one would in reality or in person but what I would categorise as a panoramic tour.

The 360 tour of //hapo is a high resolution one of panoramic shots of the physical //hapo which seems to be a shot for shot recreated simulation of the //hapo museum. The platform is all in one place, not requiring you to move platforms which is useful and easy to navigate. There are many videos that play on the virtual tour, however these seem to be videos that are present at //hapo. The potential to use the virtual museum as an expansion of the //hapo museum is full of possibilities. The virtual tour could, at the end of the tour maybe have a hyperlink to a more expansive proposed curated list of resources pertaining to the //hapo. This, I argue is a lost potential, in this virtual museum space. As Sheila Hoffman put it, “Museums are stuck in the idea of the picture of an object simply replacing that object in an online environment...This is why museums are equally comfortable with the same gallery label text accompanying the online image of an object wherever or however it might appear.”⁴¹ The online 360 tour of Freedom Park is tour of //hapo, a simulation of the ‘real world’ which can limit the possibilities of the virtual exhibit at //hapo. Hoffman argues that “online exhibitions offer the opportunity to do more—offer deeper, different or competing interpretations; avenues to explore further; chances to look and think in ways not conducive to a linear gallery setting. Few museums are taking advantage of this.”⁴² The full scope of possibilities and of a virtual museum it seems is not yet realized and instead there are oversights which can possibly weaken the potential of the virtual 360 //hapo tour. The virtual is not bound by physical limitations and thus virtual exhibitions can be created

⁴¹ Sheila K. Hoffman, "Online Exhibitions during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Museum Worlds* 8, no. 1 (2020): 213.

⁴² Hoffman, "Online Exhibitions," 213.

in potential 3D rendering, for example as a storytelling technique or even extended length videos of oral testimony. The //hapo does not need to be bound by the physical site and has the potential to become a separate entity. At the present time, in 2024 though, it is a simple re-creation simulation of the //hapo. In what follows, I want to take you, my reader, on a journey of //hapo through the virtual tour and this identified potential oversight.

The museum site of //hapo is an interpretation of the past 3.6 billion years of Southern African history, deconstructed into seven smaller sections or epochs in the museum (//hapo) building itself. //hapo has several distinct phases visualized through lighting and music changes as you walk along in the space and each space has a floor text panel indicating which phase of Southern Africa's evolution you are entering. Each epoch is a period of time, and one moves through each time or epoch by entering each new epoch. In figure 1, one can see the start of the journey of the museum space and in figure 2 you can see the delineated phases of time that the //hapo moves the museum visitor through.



Figure 1 Screenshot from the 360 virtual tour, cropped.

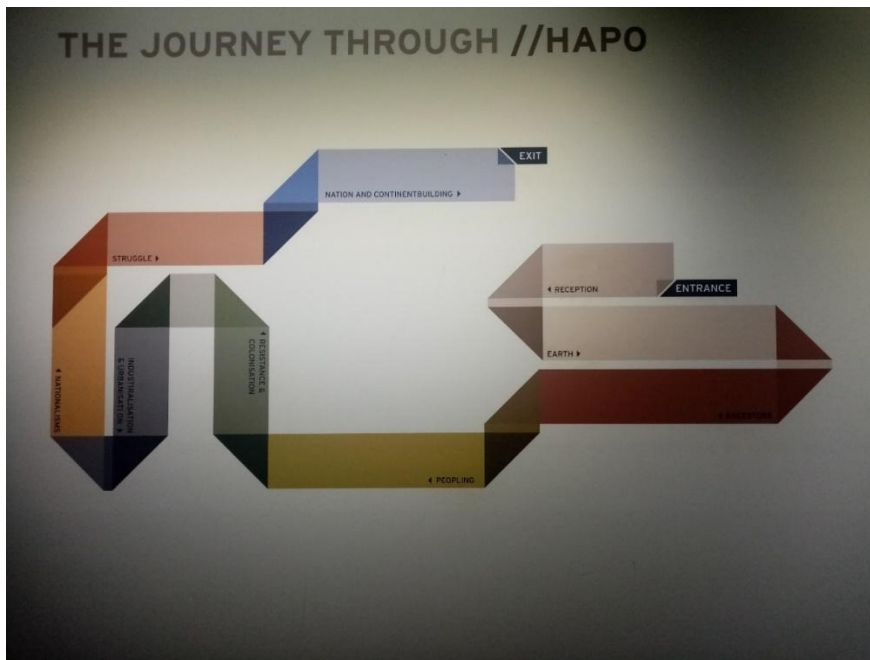


Figure 2 Image taken by Anneke Pretorius.

The Earth, is the first epoch (which explores the origins of the universe through the African story of creation), followed by the Ancestors (explores how early man learnt to control his environment), Peopling (which follows the evolving communities across the continent), Resistance & Colonisation (explore how colonisation impacted on the indigenous populations and their methods of resistance), Urbanisation & Industrialisation (this epoch follows the impact and settlement patterns that developed in communities), Nationalisms & Struggle (this follows the birth of the South African Union state and the struggle for democracy for all), and Nation & Continent Building (finally the establishment of continual democracy and the freedom from colonial rule for many African nations).⁴³

It is the sixth epoch of the //hapo museum that is my interest. In the Nationalism and Struggle epoch there is a wide-open room with many consecutive text panels that account for moments that narrate the struggle for freedom and human rights for all South Africans. The more apparent overhead lighting beams the room brightly which is in contrast to earlier epochs, which was dimmer. When stepping into this section one looks down the room and sees a mixture of displays. In fact, as the sections are broken into chronological epochs it almost reflects that this epoch is more bright or hopeful than the previous past ones. This is felt in the physical walk through, in a way that is not translated in the virtual version of the tour.

⁴³ Mdanda, "The emancipation of African voice," 18-21.



Figure 3 Screenshot from the 360 virtual tour, cropped.

In the second room, under the sixth epoch category is this room as shown above in Figure 3. On one left side is an orange wall with metal fastenings and text panels along the middle of the room narrating moments, events and people of liberation movements and armed struggles against the apartheid regime and its violence. The room contains artefacts as well as text panels. One moves chronologically through the museum, so too one would move through this section of epoch six. This is the way that, physically, my party and I moved through this space. At the end of the room is the exit of this epoch / entrance into the next epoch, which is a move through time. It is a movement from one time of history to another.

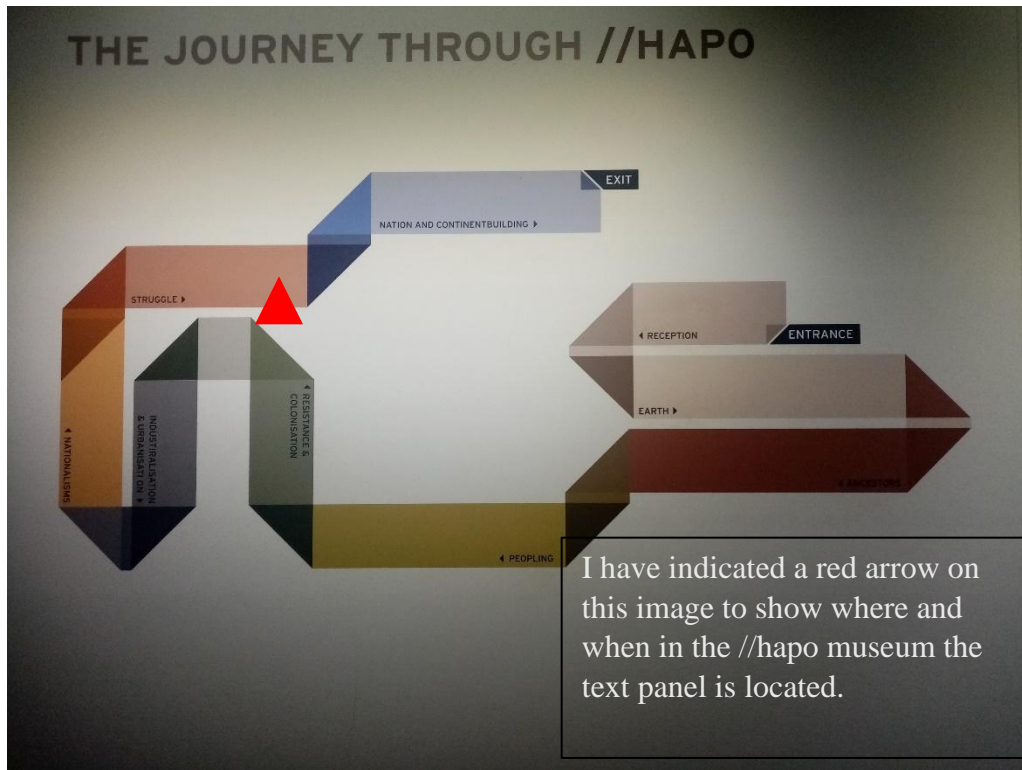


Figure 4 Image taken by Anneke Pretorius in 2022 modified in 2024.

It is before I moved through the exit/entrance, as indicated in Figure 4, that I turned back towards the large room because my companion has called my name. “Nicola, is this something here, it literally says something about missing” and there it is, the text panel. ‘THE MISSING’ text panel which has become a key focus of this mini-thesis. It is tucked between the lift and rest of the room display in a corner only visible from the opposite end. In other words, it is disconnected from the other displays, and one needs to be at the end of this epoch, turn around and look at the corner to see this text panel. It is only through the turning back, that ‘THE MISSING’ panel is noticed and seen. In disturbing the linear progression of time, in the turn to the past, is only then that ‘THE MISSING’ text panel and the missing (persons) are not missed. One has to look back through time to see those missing individuals, as it only through the past that they are known in the present time.



Figure 5 Screenshot from the 360 virtual tour, cropped and edited for clarity.

It is placed almost awkwardly and feels disconnected from the rest of the exhibition within this epoch that it seems almost easy to overlook in favour of the rest of the room. Luckily, I did not fail to see the text panel, on a corner wall all by itself. It is orange/brown with white writing and has two short paragraphs. In figure 5 one can see 'THE MISSING' text panel highlighted via a white oval.

THE MISSING

[The title is typed in a light brown/ orange colour. In paragraph one the following words are in white.]

During the apartheid era the abduction of young activist was almost a daily occurrence and many died at the hands of the security police. They disappeared without anybody knowing where or how they had gone missing, whether they were alive or dead. Desperate parents and families searched for them in morgues, reported their disappearance to unsympathetic police, enquired of the whereabouts from their friends and comrades but were mostly left without answers. Some had gone into exile and died in battle or in other parts of Africa.

[The second paragraph, also typed in white, reads as follows]

At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was set up after South Africa's transition to democracy, the truth about how some of these activists died was revealed. The accounts of their deaths were brutal, but for those families whose loved one's remains were exhumed by the government appointed Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT) there was some comfort in knowing the truth and being able to bury the remains of their children, brothers and sisters in a dignified manner. Others remain haunted by not knowing where their loved ones remains are, knowing that until they have had a proper burial they will remain restless spirits unable to enter the ancestral realm. Some families exist in the hope that their loved ones may still be alive.

The placement of this panel and the content on display reveals something to an audience and visitor. To me it said something that this specific text panel was placed in a corner disconnected from the rest of this epoch's displays. The rest of the text panels were connected and presented alongside each other. They are connected to the larger narrative of this epoch pertaining to liberation struggles. This design choice signifies to the visitor that this one board is isolated from

the rest of the narrative of this larger display and thus it can easily be overlooked by visitors to the //hapo museum. The board has a purpose to remind the visitor and audience that there are those who went missing under the previous violent regime. These words on display are dedicated to the many missing persons who had been abducted and disappeared at the hands of the apartheid state police.

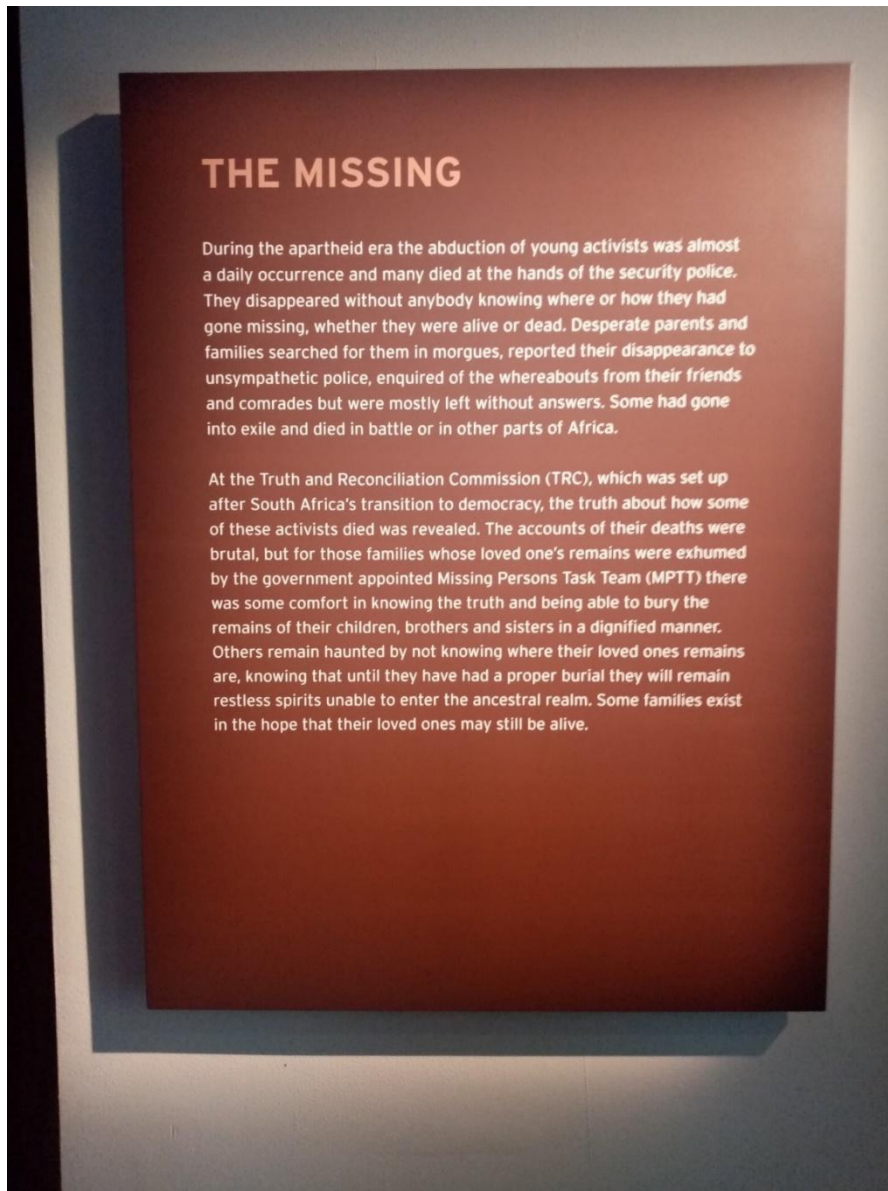


Figure 6 Taken by Anneke Pretorius in July 2022.

On a subsequent trip to Freedom Park, in 2023, the tour sequel was looking to be more transformative than anticipated. Walking through the //hapo site, my tour guide – Mr Badresh Kara, was happy to show the ‘forensic materials’ (his words) that lay in amongst the many text panels. After the outdoor portion of the tour, across the other elements outlined In the main introduction, I was excited to see the ‘forensic materials’ that Mr Kara had promised from our first discussion on a cold morning in July 2023. I was expecting to be led, ‘behind the scenes’ to speak, see these ‘forensic materials’. Out of the main rooms of display and into the archive or collection. This was my second physical site visit, and after not noticing anything particularly ‘forensic’ on my previous years’ excursion I was ecstatic.

To my surprise I was instead led through most of the way through the //hapo layout and stopped by wooden drawers, in line with what I would call in my own head, my board. The text panel – titled, ‘THE MISSING’, which stands on a wall parallel to the cabinet displays which contained the promised (and labelled by Mr Kara) forensic materials. To say I was stunned is an understatement! I had not known these artefacts lay in the cabinets and without my tour guide’s help, I would not have known either, as the drawers were closed and only open upon my request. I was allowed to take pictures, very briefly and then the display cabinets closed again. These display cabinets (which feature in the figures provided) are presented as closed with no indication of its inside contents on the virtual 360 tour.

It is not opened on the virtual tour or highlighted that this display contains anything at all. The virtual tour seemed to be shot for shot comparable to physical tour but through this interaction,

an oversight was identified. In chapter 3, I will exhume the cabinets contents , but it is worthwhile to note here, now, that there is also a stand next to the display cabinets titled, ‘WE WILL NEVER FORGET’ which is also absent from the virtual tour. This too will be discussed in Chapter 3, “Exhumation on Display?”. This absence could be an oversight or a deliberate act of not reproducing the physical onto the virtual //hapo tour. It is interesting that in concerns with missing persons and their absence that aspects of their memorialisation are missing or hidden.

I am reminded of the work of the Forensic Architecture Group, which is a group that explores concepts such as forensic aesthetic and state violence, investigating the relationship between memory, space and material. Their work is concerned with recreating a simulation of a violent event, as acts of witness to those violent events. These traces of violence are evidence that is presented in forums like exhibitions or before commissions as accounts to the events (of violence).⁴⁴ Forensic Architecture is a collective that was founded in 2010, under the helm of Eyal Weizman as an investigative practice into human right abuses, taking work of the forensic further than before. The work of Forensic Architecture investigates violence of governments and military operations by way of technology such as 3D projections and cartographic tools. As Martin Charvat explains, the residence or dwelling functions as testimony and as material witness to the violence that occurred in particular moment of violence but also then as part of the larger systematic violence occurring in the environment or area as well.⁴⁵ There is thus a relationship between my witness of the site, the //hapo museum site and the virtual simulation exposes the event of the drawers open and the stand as present. I do not claim that this is

⁴⁴ Martin Charvat, "Disrupted Dwelling: Forensic Aesthetics and the Visibility of Violence," *Espes. The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics* 11, no. 2 (2022): 69-71.

⁴⁵ Charvat, "Disrupted Dwelling," 71.

forensic aesthetics practice, per se but rather that in noting and exploring the gap between the virtual and the physical, with myself and my memory as witness to the stand and the cabinets contents that there is a complex mediation taking place.



Figure 7 Screenshot from the 360 virtual tour, cropped.

In a way the awkward placement of missing persons text panel 'THE MISSING' within the wider exhibit display room is an apt metaphor for how difficult it is to incorporate the complicated and delicate history of missing persons of apartheid in a way that conveys an end when there is no closure. Apartheid-era political disappearances and inter-civilian conflicts produced missing persons with most presumed dead but in limbo because the person is dead but their physical remains are still missing.⁴⁶ In the occurrence of locating, excavating, exhuming,

⁴⁶ Nicky Rousseau, Riedwaan Moosage, and Ciraj Rassool, "Missing and Missed: Rehumanisation, the Nation and Missing-ness," *Kronos* 44, no. 1 (2018): 17.

recovery, identification and reburial there will be, as pointed out by Nicky Rousseau, Riedwaan Moosage and Ciraj Rassool, a missing-ness.⁴⁷ The very nature of the event of forcible abduction and clandestine burial, results in ambiguities and missing information that will still be ‘missing’ even in those cases of identification, recovery and reburial and certainly in those many more cases of where that is not possible. The nature of being missing refers to the absence of one’s presence which is memorialised at the moment of absence. In essence the displays at the //hapo museum can be read as a re-enactment of missing the missing persons of apartheid and their memorialisation at this site which is problematic.

The text panel of ‘THE MISSING’ I suggest, is a memorialisation effort dedicated to apartheid era missing persons. In examining the effort through this lens, the missing persons of apartheid have a memorial through this one text panel at //hapo.⁴⁸ This memorialisation however is displayed in ways that does not signify its presence, but rather allows for it to be overlooked, to be missed, within the wider room design. This room design and placement of the text panel thus allows for the memory of missing persons to be missed within the museum’s memorialisation endeavour. That means that the missing persons of apartheid state sanctioned violence again can become missing within this context. The missing become re-engraved with becoming missed again.

The material signal for contradiction that underlines museum production and practices can be indicated by what Witz has called the “dilemma label”. The “dilemma label” is a material signal

⁴⁷ Rousseau et al., "Missing and Missed," 10.

⁴⁸ There is a stature dedicated to one person, Nokuthula Simelane erected in 2009 in Bethal. She was abducted by the apartheid police and is still missing. See Brent N. Abrahams, "Unfinished Lives: The Biographies of Nokuthula Simelane," (Unpublished Master's mini -thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2018), 97 -113.

from the museum staff towards its visitors, to indicate that there is a want or need to change the display at hand, possibly that there is a change of display in development.⁴⁹ These “dilemma label’s” can vary from places of prominence, with in-depth descriptive inscriptions or can be simple worded, simply designed and subtly displayed.

Witz identifies a need for the dilemma label in places of monument and museum, that indicate to the visitor of the museum that there is change. The dilemma label is a museum object but also a very specific exhibitionary practice “veering between the assertive and the apologetic, the dilemma label is always on show as a temporary awkward presence pointing to a future when it will no longer be required and when it will disappear and be discarded, hardly ever to be retained in the museum’s collection.”⁵⁰ Witz’s origins of thinking about the need and existence for the dilemma labels goes as far back as 1990s, through Project on Public Pasts, which was concerned with the production, representations and meaning making across museums and memorial sites, in essence investigating the public pasts and how museums produce and reproduced these pasts. The “dilemma label” is an exhibitionary practice that is made under the assumption that it is temporary, it is a placeholder by nature that is not intended as the final product. It is a disrupter of the meaning of the object or display of concern that it is attached, thus it disrupts interpretation of pasts. It exposes the frictions that are fraught with producing history in the museum. The “dilemma label” is or can also be that which is meant to indicate towards the future wherein the past has been reshaped and reconstructed in a manner that does not require a “dilemma label”.

⁴⁹ Leslie Witz, *Museum Times: Changing Histories in South Africa* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), 15.

⁵⁰ Witz, *Museum Times*, 15.

I do not suggest that ‘THE MISSING’ text panel is a “dilemma label”, however I do want to suggest that thinking through this text panel with these main functions of the “dilemma label” is productive. This “dilemma label” in this space could be the explicit gap in the display of the text panel in/at //hapo. This “dilemma label” can act as a placeholder for opportunities on the one hand but also as a signifier that the exhibition is not crystallised in finality, unwilling to change and recourse when incorrect because “the dilemma label instead gives the impression of exposing the fissures and interrupting this authority.”⁵¹ The existence of a “dilemma label” speaks to awkwardness that comes with classifying and categorising individuals into categories like ‘the missing’. One could think through the friction presented at //hapo through this lens.

Conclusion

The separate nature of these two elements, the text panel and cabinet, of the exhibition are striking, as it is very likely for one to walk through the space and not turn and completely overlook the missing board, on its own wall. The active act of looking back to the past, to the missing is necessary. In exploring //hapo as it is presented as a physical site, I have hoped to show my journey through //hapo in 2022. In the that the contents of the display cabinet are not available nor indicated, in the virtual 360 tour, which seems to be a shot for shot recreation but evidently is not. The explicit connection between the text panel and the cabinet is not indicated, despite that both are focused on the missing persons of apartheid. It is only through the disruption of linear time and the presence of the physical monument that the text panel is seen and through the disruption of time, the missing of apartheid seen. This showcases the missing-ness of the

⁵¹ Witz, *Museum Times*, 15.

memorialisation of missing persons of apartheid within this epoch and this the //hapo museum. I suggest therefore that the text panel, 'THE MISSING', can be thought through, and in line with, the properties of a "dilemma label".

Chapter 2 : Categorising the Missing

In this chapter I investigate and explore what has been inscribed on the ‘THE MISSING’ text panel. In this interrogation of what has been written, the forensic emerges, first as a category and then as part of the process of exhumation. In exploring these practices, I want to track how the category ‘missing’ as it has been presented at //hapo had emerged. In the following I want to explore how the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) came to categorise individuals and how those influences who then becomes part of those under the “missing” category in the text panel. In doing so, I also discuss the exhumations that occurred under the TRC in the 1990s and how those experiences have informed the Missing Persons Task Team, a unit set up on recommendation from the TRC. I want to explore Missing as it is the “Missing Persons” (Task Team) and explore how missing became the category established for the Task Team and for the inscription title for the text panel at //hapo, ‘THE MISSING’. The exhumations that took place in the 1990s incurred many mistakes which inform the current practices of the Missing Persons Task Team. I aim to explore the way ‘missing’ and ‘disappeared’ had been understood in the Latin American experience, known as the forensic turn, which has heavily mediated the categorisation of ‘disappeared’ and ‘missing’ in the South African context. It is, perhaps, through global trends, that we can make sense of the text panel ‘THE MISSING’. Lastly in this chapter, *forensis* will be identified and set up to investigate the text panel, which I cast as a forum in the //hapo site as in this mini-thesis.

I seek to explore the forensic as it is central to the description of the text panel. The turn to the forensic investigation, in the aftermath of mass state sanctioned violence, has occurred exponentially in the last several decades. During the period of apartheid, there were many

people who were forcibly abducted and disappeared at the hands of the state security police force. In the post apartheid, the aftermath of such gross human right abuses, and extreme violence has needed to be contented with. On the international scale, the turn to the forensic has emerged out of a particular moment, which is the 1980s Latin American experience. This worldwide expansion has influenced how the missing persons of apartheid era state sanctioned violence are understood. This is because there had been an example, almost a template, from which to pull a protocol in working with the complicated after-effects of state sponsored disappeared persons, with exhumations part of transitional justice practices in post conflict situations

TRC classifications and turn to the forensic

During the TRC process over 1500 statements were made concerning individuals who went missing, and the commission found that 477 of the individuals and their fate was still unclear at the end of the procedures of the truth commission. Of course, it must be noted that the complete number of individuals will most likely never be known due to the nature of the violence and clandestine nature of these acts, which also does not include those who suffered through structural violence at the hands of the state.⁵²

The TRC Report, Volume 6, Section Four, details that enforced disappearances usually began with imprisonment for political reasons and that disappearances took place during the first few days of being in police custody and which often resulted in a political killing.⁵³ There were two

⁵² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 6 (Cape Town: Juta, 2003), 515.

⁵³ TRC Report 6, 515.

types of disappearances identified by the TRC. The first is ‘temporary disappearance’ which relates to an “unacknowledged, long term incommunicado type of imprisonment” and the second is the more prominent type that the commission dealt with which was in the case that “the disappeared person has been killed or has died in unknown circumstances without being traced.”⁵⁴ There was a difference between ‘disappeared’ as applicable versus ‘the missing’, in the Final version of the Commission report.⁵⁵ The Report ties missing as a category in cases where it was not linked to the political and used for those categorised as ‘missing in action’ and subsequently referring to those in the armed forces who went missing and whose whereabouts are still unknown.⁵⁶ ‘Abductions’ was the category used under the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995 (the Act), which covered enforced disappearances and missing persons.⁵⁷

Compiled from the statements collected during the commission process, including Human Rights Violations statements and Amnesty applications, under the classification of ‘abductions’, the TRC noted five sub-categories. The first is that of abductions and enforced disappearances. Those categorised as abducted were understood to be forcibly or unlawfully abducted by security or unknown parties and those classified as enforced disappearances included those last seen in the custody of the security forces. The second sub-category was that of disappearances in exiles, which due to the ban of certain political parties, thousands of people went into exile between 1960 and the 1990s as many died so their fate is known but their remains ‘whereabouts’ are not

⁵⁴ TRC Report 6, 515.

⁵⁵ The South African Truth Commission Report noted that it was difficult arriving at categories due to a number of working definitions of ‘disappearance’.

⁵⁶ TRC Report 6, 518.

⁵⁷ TRC Report 6, 515.

known or still missing. The families (of those who knew or suspected that their loved ones had gone into exile) had conflicting information over the years which led to confusion.⁵⁸ The third sub-category is that of disappearances during periods of unrest; with little known about the circumstances of these disappearances other than the area in which the individual lived or worked which was in the midst of political turmoil at the same time of the disappearance of their loved one. The fourth sub-category is that of disappearances that are regarded as out of the commissions mandate, those categorised as such as their disappearance or abductions that took place outside of the time period that the commission outlined in their mandate.⁵⁹ Cases of indeterminate cause with all those who did not fit into other categories falling under this sub-category. Thus these categories were produced in administration to make sense of the data collected through the TRC process.

The Report noted that the data, its categorising of cases of ‘abduction’ as investigations were done, were changed to reflect the outcome of the investigations. Thus, for example, the data would change from the disappearance category and was coded under the killed category and these individuals move across these categorical lines. Susan Shuplli discusses a similar process of collecting data and evidence through documents and interviews – which are forensic frameworks and procedures in their work of ‘*entering evidence*’.⁶⁰ Schruppli is interested in examining what happens when media and other non-textual evidence enters into legal proceedings as mutual witness for both sides and entrusted to testify to history, much in the same way that bodily remains were entrusted to speak for themselves but through forensic

⁵⁸ TRC Report 6, 512.

⁵⁹ TRC Report 6, 523.

⁶⁰ Susan Schuppli, "Entering Evidence: Cross-Examining the Court Records of the ICTY," in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014): 282.

anthropologists. There is a standard for forensic human rights investigators. Schuppli is arguing that it is through the producers of tribunals (or in South Africa's case the TRC) actually becomes a processing machine for the materials that enter into the legal sphere and through this processes 'transform' the evidence.⁶¹ Through these procedures of scrutiny that these pieces of evidence transform into active evidence rather than passive witnesses to their event and across categories.⁶² Therefore, one could suggest that the work of the forensic shapes the categorising, thus the work of collecting evidence and thus the impact of the forensic on categorising cannot be understated.⁶³ Through the forum of the TRC the evidence was transformed, I have argued, through these forensic procedures that evidence becomes classified, codified, and categorised.

The categories are created in order to classify individuals in administrative ways, but they are not crystalised. The categorisation of disappearance has varied across characterizations, and meanings as defined by human rights groups across the globe. As numerous scholars have pointed out, such as Jay Aronson, "this designation is immensely important because it influences the extent to which the state must investigate and account for past human rights violations against particular individuals or classes of people."⁶⁴ State accountability, family recognition and resolution all depend on the how missing is categorised in the legal and institutional sense. The categorisation of missing persons was a process that produced the category of missing persons of apartheid era violence. This categorisation, particularly it relates to the political sphere and of

⁶¹ Schuppli, "Entering Evidence," 282.

⁶² Schuppli, "Entering Evidence," 292.

⁶³ Schuppli, "Entering evidence" 280-282.

⁶⁴ J. D. Aronson, "The Strengths and Limitations of South Africa's Search for Apartheid-Era Missing Persons," *International Journal of Transitional Justice* 5, no. 2 (2011): 263.

violence under conflict was certainly shaped by events of the past, meaning the category came in the aftermath and not during the active phase of security police abductions.

Lyn S. Graybill highlights the tensions that followed the TRC and in doing so their categorising of the 'missing'. Graybill specifically highlights in their text, that reconciliation for the nation was an underlying agenda of the TRC hearings in particular, which effected the commission's goal entirely.⁶⁵ Many people applied, and many more did not but were impacted by the violence of the apartheid state but were not (quasi) judicially recognised. As many as 2000 people went missing during the apartheid era whose whereabouts were unknown still (at the time of the commission), but only 477 people were officially recognised by the TRC though this does not account for all disappeared persons uncovered by the TRC.

In the TRC Report there is a preference for 'disappeared' as a categorical classification for individuals, however these same collective individuals are categorised as 'the missing' on the text panel on display at the //hapo museum at Freedom Park heritage site. While the TRC Reports has 'disappeared versus missing' as a section that dismisses the category missing for this class of victim, it does appear through that in the collective consciousness of truth and reconciliation it is 'missing' that has become the dominant category in which apartheid-era missing persons are placed as indicated by the text panel at //hapo.

The category of disappeared and disappearance is an 'old' category, however, the term has been globalised and normalised which in turn has made it as a category, 'overwhelmed'. Gabriel Gatti

⁶⁵ Lyn S. Graybill, "Pardon, punishment, and amnesia: three African post-conflict methods," *Third World Quarterly* 25, no. 6 (2004): 1118.

and Jenny Edkins discuss people who have disappeared/ gone missing but do not necessarily approach the category in the same way. I would suggest that they are both pushing for the person outside of their missing status to be considered. Gatti discusses the disappeared person and how they have been categorised over the last half a century.⁶⁶ It is important to bring up Gatti as he discusses the international definitions, such as Universal Human Rights and the United Nations, of missing persons, but also highlights the disputes and ‘unsettled’ nature surrounding categorising missing or disappeared persons specifically.⁶⁷ Gatti argues that the concept and classification of a ‘disappeared person’ transformed from a very specific political and localised setting (from the Argentine experience) like that of the forcibly disappeared or the detained disappeared into a more universally applicable concept.⁶⁸ The 1974 to 1983 period was marked by disturbing pervasive terrorism conducted by the Argentine state by way of the Argentine security forces, who abducted and ‘disappeared’ thousands in Argentina. These acts of violence were enacted on those who were deemed politically resistant to the authorities, since the military coup d’état that put the civil military in control. The category of enforced disappearance and the figuration of the disappeared have travelled around the world.

This undoubtedly influenced the categorisation of the figure of forcibly disappeared in the South African perspective.⁶⁹ Gatti argues that the concept and classification of a ‘disappeared person’ transformed from a very specific political and localised setting into a more universally applicable concept across disciplines and across contexts which situate and place disappearance and the

⁶⁶ Gabriel Gatti, "The Social Disappeared: Genealogy, Global Circulations, and (Possible) Uses of a Category for the Bad Life," *Public Culture* 32, no. 1 (2020): 25-26.

⁶⁷ Gatti, "The Social Disappeared," 25-26.

⁶⁸ Gatti, "The Social Disappeared," 37.

⁶⁹ Gabriel Gatti, "Outside the borders of the state, abandonment. On the new forms of disappearance," *Sociology Compass* 17, no. 6 (2023): 6.

figure of the disappeared in differing situations. This is not without critique, as Gatti argues that this can situate disappearance closer to death, in liminal and ambiguous ways rather than “closer to the plane of not a good life”.⁷⁰ In other words, death and disappearance do not need to be interchangeable in regard to the social lives of persons. Gatti is arguing against what he considers an ‘overcharging’ of the term of disappearance, which can in turn legally risk justice standards and jeopardise the effective and affective nature of the disappeared as the category as has been legally deployed in the Latin American experience in which it originated.⁷¹ Gatti is thus arguing that the term ‘disappearance’ has become overwhelmed or overcharged and thus too broad and accommodating too many meanings. Gatti both critiques and calls for the expanded meanings of the category disappearances that forces it within notions of past, memory, death and the state, and ‘THE MISSING’ text panel at //hapo evoke these precise notions.

In fact, Gatti offers the term “socially disappeared” to recognise those who disappeared in the ways that do not “fit into” those boundaries.⁷² Thus allowing for the category of the disappeared to be applicable in differing circumstances. Jenny Edkins too has an approach to understanding how the missing are categorised. She elaborates that in the process of categorising the missing, sometimes the procedures that do so can risk making the missing person into objects of other things like policy or accountability. In other words, procedures that respond and categorise the missing can put the missing in relation to those accounting for them.⁷³ Thus, the missing or

⁷⁰ Gatti, "Outside the borders" 5.

⁷¹ Gatti, "Outside the borders," 5.

⁷² Jenny Edkins, "Preface and Introduction," in *Missing: Persons and Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2016), 12.

⁷³ Edkins, "Preface and Introduction," 12.

disappeared as a category, as highlighted by Gatti and Edkins, have limitations and boundaries that require more than the category itself to be considered.

The work of the forensic has not always been connected to humanitarian work and working to 'right' gross human rights violations, but there was a shift in the last century, and it has become a globally accepted practice for circumstances of extreme violence and tragedy. The goal of humanitarian work according to Stephen Cordner and Morris Tidball-Binz, is to provide benefits in post conflict settings. Managing the dead and protecting their dignity but also helping to identify them (to prevent and resolve the tragedy of people missing), is one of the three pillars of humanitarian responses following conflicts or disasters along with caring for survivors and returning basic services. The forensic and its connection to the missing of WWII needs a mention as well as it was the first practice of the work of the forensic in this sense that officially occurred.⁷⁴ Associated with these actions were laws that relied on the role and work of the forensic. In 1992 the UN recognised and adopted the commission of Human Rights and acknowledged the value and the role of the forensic in human rights and humanitarian investigations including providing evidence in trials of international criminal law.⁷⁵ The manner of death was important to this law as well as identifying the dead and giving news to the family of the missing (which was not always a priority of international law). However, in practice the needs of the family of the dead before the exhumation were not prioritised. International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) put forward that those involved in the work of forensics had

⁷⁴ Stephen Cordner and Morris Tidball-Binz, "Humanitarian forensic action — Its origins and future," *Forensic Science International* 279 (2017): 66.

⁷⁵ Cordner and Tidball-Binz, "Humanitarian forensic action," 66.

its obligations to not only the deceased after exhumation but also their loved ones.⁷⁶ To understand why this is so, is to return to the Argentine experience.

In 1984, the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons or the Comisión Nacional sobre las Desapariciones de Personas (CONADEP) resulted in an active investigating unit working to resolve the cases of disappearances of thousands of Argentinians.⁷⁷ The aftermath of Argentinian state violence against its own civilians created procedures that set a standard that influences on the measures that take place in the aftermath of state sanctioned violence globally such as the emergence of the Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense (EAAF), a forensic team who exhumes mass graves with the aim of locating and identifying the *desaparecidos*. Important to understanding the use of the category of disappearance therefore is also a history of the ‘forensic turn’. The arrival of forensic agents as ‘experts’ at places of mass violence and genocide, in the search for bodies is the genesis of the forensic turn.⁷⁸ Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman map the emergence of this turn within the context of the work of the EAAF and with the application of forensic techniques of identification in identifying the war criminal Josef Mengele in 1985.⁷⁹

Eyal Weizman also puts forward that the work of the forensic is to reconnect to the forum as well as the field of investigation.⁸⁰ Through the framework of the forensic and *forensis*, the

⁷⁶ Cordner and Tidball-Binz, "Humanitarian forensic action," 67.

⁷⁷ EAAF 2003 ANNUAL REPORT, (Argentina, 2003), 21.

⁷⁸ Cath Collins, "The reemergence of the disappeared, the role of remains and the forensic gaze," *Memory Studies* 13, no. 3 (2020): 12.

⁷⁹ Eyal Weizman, "'Introduction: Forensis' in Forensic Architecture," in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Sternberg Press, 2014), 9. See also Thomas Keenan and Eyal Weizman, *Mengele's Skull: The Advent of a Forensic Aesthetics* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012).

⁸⁰ Weizman, "Forensis," 9.

relationship that includes the forum will allow for a better space for politics and overall investigation and examination.⁸¹ What this means is that allowing the forensic investigation to not be committed or bound to the courtroom but rather expand its reach to other types of forums, will allow for more investigations to occur for the historian, this also enable the possibilities of new and different histories to emerge. Through the forum of the commission such as the TRC for instance, the evidence is transformed, and one could argue that is through these forensic procedures that evidence becomes classified, codified, and categorised. Here, again, the scholarship highlights how interconnected forensics is to processes and forums like the TRC and their categorising. Thus, the impact of the forensic is not just of scientific techniques but using these tools of the forensic to examine mass or anonymous graves but also to bring about a process of restoration of dignity to those missing persons who died in these situations.⁸² The work of the forensic has been and continues to be a practice of investigation and evidence gathering that aims to help restore justice and dignity to those who have had their dignity and lives taken from them.

The normative understanding of forensics refers to scientific investigation and practices used to establish evidentiary truth and facts to be presented in the legal context, such as courts of law.⁸³

The forensic turn has meant not a shift away from legal settings but the expansion of forensic investigation practices into investigations of political violence. As a mechanism of transitional justice, the aim of the forensic in this sense is the search, exhumation and identification of human

⁸¹ Weizman, "Forensis," 9.

⁸² Jenny Edkins, "Missing Migrants and the Politics of Naming: Names Without Bodies, Bodies Without Names," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 83, no. 2 (2016): 359.

⁸³ Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Anstett, "Introduction," in *Human remains and identification: Mass violence, genocide, and the 'forensic turn'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 12.

remains, a counter forensic practice. While the practice of forensic investigation was/is traditionally in the hands of state powers, in recent decades, there has been an emergence of those wanting to take that out of state control and practices and rather scrutinize its potential through political, theoretical, and aesthetic lens.⁸⁴

TRC Exhumations and the MPTT

At the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which was set up after South Africa's transition to democracy, the truth about how some of these activists died was revealed. The accounts of their deaths were brutal, but for those families whose loved one's remains were exhumed by the government appointed Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT) there was some comfort in knowing the truth and being able to bury the remains of their children, their brothers and sisters in a dignified manners.

Quoted from 'THE MISSING' text panel at //hapo, these two sentences register to museum goers that exhumation and reburial has occurred for some of 'the missing' being addressed in the text panel. The act of forcibly disappearing people was done by members of the state security police. These circumstances thus would have little records and paper trails but even in those cases the paper record was vague and after the official end of apartheid many documents surrounding such acts (violence, torture, and murder) were either destroyed, 'hidden' and falsified. Therefore, the act of forcibly disappearing a person would be reproduced in a way in the afterlives of the

⁸⁴ Zuzanna Dziuban, "Introduction: Forensics in the Expanded Field," in *Mapping the 'Forensic Turn': Engagements with Materialities of Mass Death in Holocaust Studies and Beyond* (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2017), 11. See also Eyal Weizman, "Introduction," in *Forensics: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 11-13. See also Keenan, Thomas. *Counter-forensics and photography*. (The Routledge Companion to Photography Theory, 2019) 276-292.

missing person as their recovery was and will continue to be near to impossible. Exhumations of apartheid era victims of enforced disappearances began in 1997 under the stewardship of the TRC. The commission gathered information through statements made by the people who believed that their loved ones had disappeared because of political involvement.

The TRC's Investigations Unit would then cross-reference these statements with amnesty applications and names given by the African National Congress of their kidnapped members. The Investigation Unit examined many reports of disappearances, which included questioning perpetrators, sites identified, and secret burials examined.⁸⁵ Due to the power the commission had during its process, it could proactively engage in activities, including the power to subpoena, Section 29, (meaning legally requiring people to court to give over information). Thus, many enabling mechanisms allowed the commission to operate and deal with missing persons proactively, including holding its investigations, the amnesty process, and exhumations processes.⁸⁶ Fifty exhumations were conducted in the KwaZulu Natal region of South Africa, bookending this first phase of exhumations. The first exhumation was that of Ms. Phila Portia Ndwandwe on the 12 of March 1997 and over a year later the last exhumation in this time frame was that of Mr Linda Fikekahle "Post" Kuzwayo on 8 June 1998.⁸⁷

In the aftermath of such killings, many bodies were buried in makeshift graves or if properly buried, as unidentified bodies, for example, John or Jane Doe and in pauper graves. Many sites of burial were former security branch safe houses. The exhumation of graves, in these cases was

⁸⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 2 (Cape Town: Juta, 1998) 2, 519.

⁸⁶ TRC Report 2, 519.

⁸⁷ TRC Report 2, 545.

conducted by the pathologists, who removed the remains, one bone at a time, and then handing the remains over to the families for reburial. The technique of exhumation in this region also had specialist undertakers test the soil, of the cornered-off suspected burial area for soil disturbances. In the Johannesburg region, the presence of a pathologist was not mandated, and the emphasis was on the speedy return of remains to the families. For the TRC, exhumations and return of human remains to loved ones was a form of symbolic reparation. In an audit by the TRC in 1999, findings of the practices of the exhumations, show that there were many mistakes and mishandling errors, including misidentification and handovers to the wrong families which was deeply unsettling and traumatic for the families.⁸⁸

Reburial and funeral practices are important facets of the restoration of dignity and personhood. For example, in cases of former guerilla fighters, their reburials were held in the manner of a military funeral.⁸⁹ The TRC reported on the lessons and recommendations it had for further sensitive exhumations that need carrying out, “The resolution of these disappearance cases is perhaps the most significant piece of unfinished business for the Commission. The Commission was therefore of the view that these cases should not simply be abandoned, but that further mechanisms should be put in place to finalize them.”⁹⁰ During the Truth Commission exhumations, namely the police forensic units and the University of Pretoria anthropology department, were heavily steeped in pro-apartheid personnel and thus unfit for the work of the exhumation along with the mishandling errors and misidentified in the TRC review of these

⁸⁸ Nicky Rousseau, "Identification, politics, disciplines: missing persons and colonial skeletons in South Africa," in *Human remains and identification: Mass violence, genocide, and the 'forensic turn'*, ed. Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Anstett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), 178.

⁸⁹ Rousseau, "Identification, politics, disciplines," 184.

⁹⁰ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report, Volume 6 (Cape Town: Juta, 1998), 565.

1990s exhumations.⁹¹ This experience heavily influenced the creation and practices of the Missing Persons Task Team (MPTT), which was created to exhume, identify and facilitate the reburial of those under their mandate. The goal of the MPTT is to provide official recognition of the individual and for restoration of their dignity.

The Missing Persons Task Team is located under the authority of the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA). The TRC had recommended a number of cases that required further investigation and these cases were handed to a special unit within the NPA, the Priority Crime Litigation Unit. The MPTT is within this unit. The MPTT is headed by Madeleine Fullard, who previously worked as part of the TRC as a researcher and is a trained historian. The work of the MPTT has focused on tracing evidence, exhumation, and identifying human remains.⁹² It should not be a stretch of the imagination to suggest that the forensic turn, especially the protocol of the Latin American experience and the work of the EAAF has mediated the conceptual and categorisation of missing persons of apartheid in the post apartheid 'reckoning' of the past's, since 2002 a former member of the EAAF has been a permanent member of the MPTT.

The exhumation process is mediated between the ground site/ burial site and the above ground recovery by archaeologists and anthropologists. The material remains of people are exhumed and forensic work of identification that include of things such as age, height, cause of death. To exhume human remains is to recover the physical remains which in turn recovers the material remains of individuals producing what Clyde Snow termed osteobiography. These actions, according to Nicky Rousseau, invoke the very physicality or materiality of the person which acts

⁹¹ Rousseau, "Identification, politics, disciplines," 188.

⁹² Rousseau, "Identification, politics, disciplines," 188.

as rehumanisation. In other words, it is as an act of repair and care that is made through recovery and production of the human as person.⁹³

To acknowledge all that families have been through, the suffering of the families has come to be so critical to the mission of those involved in the Task Team. Therefore, the work of the MPTT is not just forensic investigations of the missing but broader in that it takes into account the wishes of the family and their ‘closure in what happened to their loved ones as critical to the recovery of human remains. As Kylie Thomas highlights, “In this way, the investigations and exhumations carried out by the MPTT have formed a critical countermeasure to the closure signalled by the end of the TRC hearings.”⁹⁴ And yet, following Chapter 1 of this mini-thesis, ‘closure’ is an open question.

The handover ceremony of exhumed and forensically analysed human remains to confirm identification is the official end of the process of the MPTT. This ceremonial act of handover of the remains has often taken place at the site of Freedom Park. The handover of remains is not under the directive of the MPTT despite how closely associated it is. The Department of Justice handles this, and the minister of justice is usually present.⁹⁵

The missing persons presence can be felt even in the absence of their physical material existence.

Individual persons as such were politically active and uniquely missed by their loved ones.

⁹³ Nicky Rousseau, "Eastern Cape Bloodlines I: Assembling the Human," *Parallax* 22, no. 2 (2016): 209.

⁹⁴ Kylie Thomas, "Exhuming Apartheid: Photography, Disappearance and Return," *Cahiers d'études africaines*, no. 230 (2018): 430.

⁹⁵ Rousseau, "Identification, politics, disciplines," 190.

Through the forum of the TRC, their absence was categorised and classified which shifted the missing persons to be understood in a category of missing persons. This speaks to a major factor in Edkins understanding of missing persons, that is the ‘unaccounted for’ speaks to the person first being accounted for in relation and nature to another and others.⁹⁶ A missing person, is related to the actions of reporting of those around the missing person accounting for their absence, especially in relation to institutions like policing agencies. Not all missing people are reported though, there are those without ties or connections.

The bureaucracy of the state, both in the Foucaudian biopolitical sense and Mbembe’s necropolitical sense, are systems of control, to keep the subject in her place. This is a place of registration, identification, control and objectification. The same agency puts accountability of the missing on the state authorities which becomes about administration and keeping records. This too leads to categorisation, like citizen or refugee, one can be categorised accordingly as missing. It is in this similar sense that Gatti discusses the expanded meanings and uses of disappearance. The drive to find the missing is similar from authorities and loved ones but the reasoning behind the actions are very different – one is a challenge to administrative state order and the other is due to the missing unique absence of the person.⁹⁷ For Edkins thus, “the missing are whatever beings, loved ones, and the ‘principle of the enemy of the state’ hence perhaps, the huge resources devoted to finding them and turning them from the missing to the dead or the living.”⁹⁸ This speaks to the absence/presence dynamic of missing persons and their disruptors of space and time, as well as the duality of the absence/ presence dynamic of missing persons.

⁹⁶ Edkins, "Introduction," 12.

⁹⁷ Edkins, "Introduction," 12.

⁹⁸ Edkins, "Introduction," 14.

In the text panel of 'THE MISSING', it highlights that some families live in the hope that their loved ones are still alive, while others have had answers and have reburied their loved ones. These differing types of loved ones are understood by the inscription of the text panel together, in other words they are categorised in the same way. Therefore, it appears, they are memorialised through their categorisation, which has been influenced by the forensic turn (the forensic).

Forensis

Throughout this chapter I have been referring to the forensic, the forum and *forensis*. This is because *forensis* is the root word of forensics and as Eyal Weizman highlights, by using *forensis*, we reorientate this practice of contemporary forensics and expand upon it. The original meaning of forensics means pertaining to the forum. The forum has been lost and fixed in the modern linguistic lexicon of forensic practices.⁹⁹ The forum was a multidimensional space of politics, law, and economy but linguistically it has shifted and been limited to the court of law.¹⁰⁰

Forensis is used as an operative concept of critical practice. *Forensis* is composed of two elements that relate and shape each other in active ways. The field and the forum are these two elements. The field which is the site of investigation is not a neutral territory but dynamic terrain that both shapes conflict and is shaped by conflict. The forum as the site is made up of a contending triad of: the contested object or site; the mediator tasked with mediating the object or site and then an assembly of the public. Thus, *forensis* encapsulates the relationship between the 'animation' of material objects and the public gathering. Weizman argues that through the work

⁹⁹ Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," 10.

¹⁰⁰ Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," 10.

of forensic architecture, the practice of establishing forums around the evidence can be a benchmark showcase, as it is usually the case in forums where evidence entered already pre-existing courts (forum).¹⁰¹

I find thinking about *forensis* as a critical practice productive in thinking of the text panel of ‘THE MISSING’. One could cast the site of exhumation as the field (the site of MPTT investigation) and the text panel as a forum. This is because the forum, as per Weizman, shifts between the site objects or site, the interpretation and the public gathering and thus one can think through the text panel as the forum shifting between these elements.¹⁰² The evidence has been interpreted and mediated by the TRC as well as by the exhibition design of the //hapo museum site. The text panel casts as a forum as it is a public space where the results of the investigation (the field) is then presented and potentially contested. This work is thus a discussion of the text panel and thus a forum. The text panel is thus mediated and is always under mediation, it is unsettled and not fixed. The nature of forensic investigations is very intricate and ambiguous despite converting back to the more elaborate understanding of forensics as a critical understanding and practice. Scientific investigations aim to rule out ambiguity and uncertainty, however as Weizman points out, there will always be ambiguity and complexities and that, “*forensis* thus should be understood as something akin to a critical forensic practice’ that includes both the production of evidence and the querying of the practices of evidence making.”¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," 20.

¹⁰² Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," 10.

¹⁰³ Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," 12.

This highlights that in dealing with the forensic, there is expansive litany of meanings of concepts and practices. There is a need for *forensis* as a concept and as a critical practice. There is massive potential to make use of this *forensis* practice across disciplines in order to investigate and analyse data and information (evidence) in various modes. This speaks to the expanding and ‘unbounding’ that forensics has undergone, from referring to the legal (and to courtrooms) and to across disciplines like anthropology and architecture and in the case of this mini-thesis, historical studies. The need to grapple with expansive concepts is crucial when dealing with the lack of clarity and ambiguity as its opaque ambiguous work and the language surrounding concept reflects this ambiguity. For Riedwaan Moosage, this can be understood through missing-ness, which he described as “located in the intersection of presence and absence, ruled by the uncertain nature that is present in evidence and mourning.”¹⁰⁴ The work of politics and perhaps memorialisation initiatives, is to abide by missing-ness through asserting its potential while working through the conditions that elude any attempts to master missing-ness.¹⁰⁵ Political disappearances and inter-civilian conflicts produced missing persons in South Africa conflict with most presumed dead but also in limbo because the person is dead but still missing. As Robin- Lea Karating highlights in her work, scientific voice can become louder than that of the person, which can lead to another phase of missing-ness between reburials and memorialisation.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Nicky Rousseau, Riedwaan Moosage, and Ciraj Rassool, "Missing and Missed: Rehumanisation, the Nation and Missing-ness," *Kronos* 44, no. 1 (2018): 31.

¹⁰⁵ Rousseau et al., "Missing and Missed," 31.

¹⁰⁶ Robin-Lea Karating, "Exhumations, reburials and history making in post-apartheid South Africa," (Master's Mini- thesis, University of the Western Cape, 2018), 3.

In the following chapter I engage the material exhumed artefacts that are missed/hidden in the display cabinet opposite the text panel that I show creates coincided meanings. This is important to tie to the forum of the text panel as was part of the field, that became evidence of the crimes that has shifted to become part of display. These materials speak directly to the discussion of the text panel in a material manner and can bring much to the forum at hand (the text panel of ‘THE MISSING’).

Conclusion

The shift towards the use of forensic investigations in response to past conflict as a means of attempting justice, through practices of scientific technique rewired for exhumation and ID of human remains is one key facet of the forensic turn. The other essential shift has been the shift/turn away from witness testimony towards the emphasis on material evidence as it enters the forum, like that of the legal court room but also other public flexible forums such as the TRC and //hapo and the text panel, ‘THE MISSING’. This shift has exploded in popularity across the global in response to the many post conflict nations. The genesis of the forensic investigation becoming integral to justice seeking after mass state terror and violence can be pinned to the Latin American moment and the creation of the EAAF. In this chapter I have investigated how the TRC had classified people under the category of abductions, which is also understood as the text panel at //hapo ‘THE MISSING’ and the Missing Persons Task Team is named as such. The exhumations undertaken in the 1990s have been discussed as the mistakes which inform the current practices of the Task Team. In exploring the way missing and disappeared have been understood in the Latin American experience, we have seen how that, which is also known as the forensic turn, has heavily mediated the categorization of disappeared as missing in the South

African context. It is, perhaps, through global trends, that we can make sense of the text panel 'THE MISSING'. Lastly in this chapter, *forensis* has been understood and deployed to investigate the text panel, which I cast as a forum in the //hapo site and in this work as well.

Chapter 3 : Exhumation on display?

Earlier I noted that upon my second visit to Freedom Park, in April 2023, I made an unexpected, yet provocative discovery. Walking through the //hapo site, my tour guide – Mr Badresh Kara, was happy to show the confirmed ‘forensic materials’ that lay in and amongst the rest of the collections. I was led along to the room that holds the text panel, ‘THE MISSING’ and to the wooden cabinet. The cabinet display is closed despite the presence of a stand with a text panel attached to the right of the cabinet. This stand is barely knee high but does make reference to the contents of the cabinet. The ‘WE WILL NEVER FORGET’ stand, as noted before in this mini-thesis, is ironically not reproduced in the virtual 360 tour. This deliberate choice or careless oversight is reinforced by the display cabinets being shown as shut on the 360 virtual tour. No indication of either the stand or the contents of the cabinets lead to an oversight of these exhumed artefacts. Their presence in the cabinets at //hapo, in epoch six Nationalism and Struggle, suggest they are intended for visitor observation but with the omission and absence, these artefacts are missing from the virtual //hapo tour, which results in a doubled missing. That is to say, in one instance missing if one does not disrupt linear time and look past to the past, as it is required at the /hapo site and in another instance, it is missed because it is absent from the virtual tour.

It is within this chapter that I offer an exhumation (of sorts) of the contents within the drawers of the cabinet. In doing so I ask you the reader to think through the question, are the exhumed artefacts on display at//hapo? This leading question is not presented by //hapo itself but rather has presented itself through my thinking through of the text panel and the cabinets together (as “dilemma labels” and through deploying a critical reading guided by *forensis* as a critical

practice), I would suggest together it lends itself as a memorialisation initiative of the missing persons of apartheid.

The manner of death and after death (afterlife) experience imbues the very exhumed material objects with valued meaning. The human remains and exhumed artefacts lay together until they are unburied/disinterred and recovered, that is to say, exhumed. In the case of this mini-thesis, and the artefacts at Freedom Park, the exhumed materials have been separated from the human remains which have been reburied in their final resting place. In investigating the contents of the display cabinets, I aim to exhume that which is within the display cabinets. In the following sections, I aim to follow the standard exhumation practice framework. Firstly, I present a preliminary investigation in order to locate the site. This will be done by exploring how these exhumed materials become part of the museum. I then excavate the display cabinets and exhume its contents. It is important to be clear on what precisely is in the cabinets in order to ‘fill in the gap’ that is created between the virtual tour and the physical //hapo site. In what would be the forensic laboratory post mortem investigations, I offer a forensic reading to explore the concept of the museum-cemetery and repurpose the concept to think of the text panel ‘THE MISSING’ and the ‘WE WILL NEVER FORGET’ stand on the side of the display cabinet as a resting place for the exhumed artefacts. In this sense, it is possible to consider ‘THE MISSING’ as headstone and the cabinet display as grave.

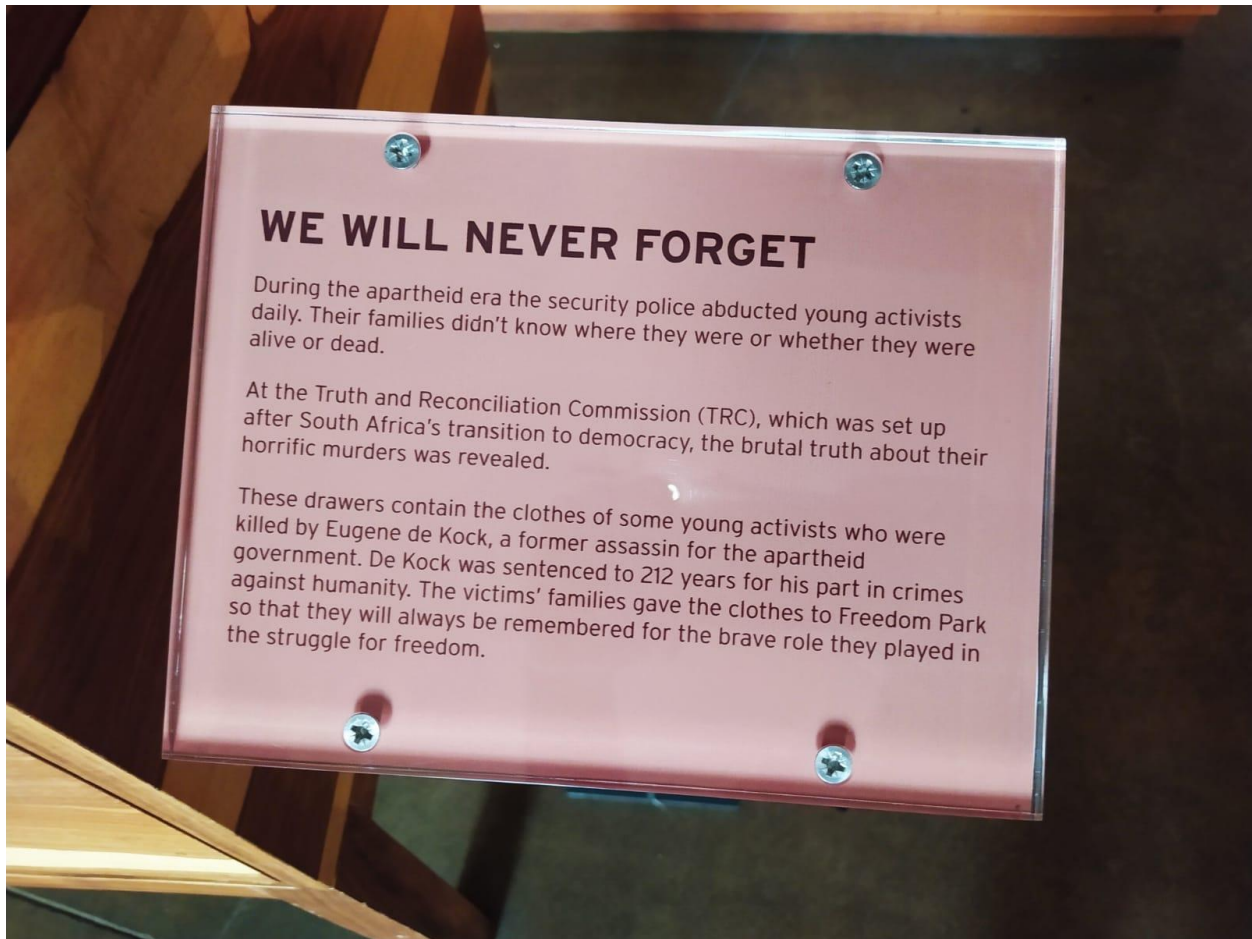


Figure 8 Photography taken by Nicola Pretorius 2023.

‘Preliminary investigations’

These drawers contain the clothes of some young activists who were killed by Eugene de Kock, a former assassin for the apartheid government. De Kock, was sentenced to 212 years for his part in crimes against humanity. The victims’ families gave the clothes to Freedom Park so that they will always be remembered for the brave role they played in the struggle for freedom.

The TRC investigations into the whereabouts of missing persons is aimed to bring peace and clarity. The major limitation of the TRC investigation, especially in this case pertain to missing

persons and their likely deaths, is that much of the information does rely on the perpetrators of those crimes.¹⁰⁷ Even in cases where amnesty was applied for and information pertained to the crimes and locations disclosed in the hopes to find clandestine burial sites, this ideal outcome is not possible for some of the missing persons of apartheid. Riedwaan Moosage, puts forward in his work that the preparators that killed later became the witness to the crimes on which forensic investigators had to rely.¹⁰⁸ This reliance on preparators testimony, information and witness unfortunately means many cases of individuals have little to no chance of exhumation and recovery.

The process of exhumation is not easy and in fact, is a very skilled and meticulous process that takes time. Those forensic experts conducting the process, therefore, want to be as sure as possible that they have the right location, the right person who is supposed to be buried at the location, and the wishes of the family should be central to the decisions that follow. Broken down into four phases, as identified by the EAAF (which as discussed before is echoed in the MPTT practices), exhumation investigation practices begin with firstly the preliminary investigation, which includes the investigation of information of the recovery and data on the ante mortem (before death / post mortem meaning after death) and data surrounding the disappearance. The second phase is that of the exhumation of the remains and of other material objects, the remains are recovered; often with families invited to witness and the actions

¹⁰⁷ Rousseau, "Eastern Cape Bloodlines," 211-212.

¹⁰⁸ In this case it was the killing of Sizwe Kondile, Siphiwo Mthimkulu and 'Topsy' Madaka by Dirk Coetzee in 1982. Riedwaan Moosage, "Missing-ness, History and Apartheid era disappearances: The figuring of Siphiwo Mthimkulu, Tobekile 'Topsy' Madaka and Sizwe Kondile as missing dead persons." (Unpublished PhD thesis: VU Amsterdam and University of the Western Cape, September, 2018).

photographed. The third is that of laboratory analysis, wherein the recovered materials are analysed in a laboratory in order to determine a biological profile (osteobiography), and hypothesis on the identity of the person are created in order to be genetically analysed which is the fourth phase. The second and third phases are documented through the photograph as well as administratively. Following these processes, as is the case in South Africa, are the return and reburial of those exhumed, often involving both state actors and families of the dead. However, as I explain below, these processes are often fraught with tensions.¹⁰⁹

For instance, in the Rwanda circumstances of exhumations, the first forensic investigations and exhumations were for the international community purposes, that is to say, for the International Federation For Human Rights, in 1993 a year before the Rwandan genocide. There were several foreign forensic agents, specifically forensic anthropologists, that were United Nations ‘sponsored’ that carried out several thousand exhumations organised and carried out relating to mass violence in 1993. However, in the post genocide era there has been local exhumations and reburials in the immediate aftermath, once the new state had come into order. The assistance for these exhumations came through local churches, a seemingly stable force in this period for Rwandans. As Rémi Korman argues, the exhumations and reburials practices in Rwanda had been unique. The process has shifted from small scale and local, and wherein loved ones where possible to identify their family members (re)buried individuals on family land with the help of funding from Churches.¹¹⁰ There was a push for collective exhumation and reburials which

¹⁰⁹ What We Do," EAAF | Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, accessed December 8, 2024, <https://eaaf.org/quienes-somos/que-hacemos/>.

¹¹⁰ Rémi Korman, "Bury or display? The politics of exhumation in post-genocide Rwanda," in *Human remains and identification: Mass violence, genocide, and the 'forensic turn'*, ed. Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Anstett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015): 204-205.

became a state responsibility (the emergency decent burial programme) administered by the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs (Minitraso) and then again a shift, in 1996 which meant these exhumations were incorporated within the Genocide Memorial Commission (Commission memorial du genocide).¹¹¹ This shift shows the fluctuating focus and responsibilities of burials and exhumations, where it was first localised and familial responsibility, then the objective was a collective reburial from mass graves and then later under the steward of the Ministry of Culture: the exhumations centred around questions of memory and memorialisation.¹¹² These programmes all culminated in genocide cemeteries and memorials sites. In the case of Rwanda, the collective memorialisation pertaining to violence, pain and exhumation is, by design and order of the state, prioritised over the familial relationship to the exhumed and their memorialisation. This is in contrast to the artefacts on display at //hapo and the central principles of the Missing Persons Task Team.

The hope of discovery of answers may be slim but the hope exists, which seemed to be non-existent at the time of the end of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the last half century exhumations have become a common technique and practice for dealing with post-conflict environments and their mass violence. Nicky Rousseau, Riedwaan Moosage, and Ciraj Rassool argue that in the South African context, post 1994, exhumation teams and professional agencies have stakes in, what Rassool argues is the moment of return.¹¹³ Rousseau et al. argue that missing-ness is often reproduced as the disappeared become part of the larger narratives of the nation, and that exhumation practices have become associated with restitution and return. In

¹¹¹ Korman, "Bury or display," 205.

¹¹² Korman, "Bury or display," 205.

¹¹³ Rousseau et al., "Missing and Missed," 12.

the act of return, there is the act of re-humanisation which is tied to personhood which is connected to the objects within the site of initial clandestine burial.

There is a complex and dynamic relationship between the exhumed human remains and artefacts from the grave, as they bear witness to the violent death, burial and exhumation, which can disrupt narratives of the past in the present. As Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk put forward, “In the process, the thing becomes enmeshed in memory politics, both facilitating and challenging the governing narratives of the past and processes of nation building (Stanczyk, 2016; Young, 2018).”¹¹⁴ As objects, (the thing), move and their value and ownership shifts, Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stanczyk argue that, “objects become ontologically and epistemologically unsettled.”¹¹⁵ This unsettling allows the material objects, the exhumed artefacts, to change and absorb new identities and assume or be assigned to, new categories. Anthropology, archaeology, cultural geography and related disciplines have more successfully placed objects, particularly objects of sentimental value, at the centre of their inquiry into conflict, displacement and genocide.¹¹⁶ These disciplines focus more on the individual (the person) in their investigations of conflict and post conflict situation, their research sees material objects as visceral markers of these experiences and as carriers of such memories.¹¹⁷ The

¹¹⁴ Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk, "Introduction: The Surviving Thing: Personal Objects in the Aftermath of Violence," *Journal of Material Culture* 25, no. 4 (2020): 384.

¹¹⁵ Dziuban and Stańczyk, "Introduction: The Surviving Thing," 384.

¹¹⁶ See Layla Renshaw, "Missing Bodies Near-at-Hand: The Dissonant Memory and Dormant Graves of the Spanish Civil War," *An Anthropology of Absence*, 2010, 45-61; Layla Renshaw, "The dead and their public. Memory campaigns, issue networks and the role of the archaeologist in the excavation of mass graves," *Archaeological Dialogues* 20, no. 1 (2013), 35-47 and Layla Renshaw, "Unrecovered objects: Narratives of dispossession, slow violence and survival in the investigation of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War," *Journal of Material Culture* 25, no. 4 (2020), 428- 446.

¹¹⁷ Dziuban and Stańczyk, "Introduction: The Surviving Thing," 383.

material objects have evidentiary value (used as evidence), possibly productive in forensic investigations, alongside human remains these objects are also searched for, exhumed and assessed and scrutinised as evidence of crimes and are used to support justice in the aftermath of conflict.¹¹⁸ But these objects also become the embodiment of feelings, even more so in the absence of a body in which mourning and memory are centred. Objects travel, literally, between persons, archaeologist, forensic experts and state actors. Exhumed artefacts become exposed to symbolic and political repurposing often at the end of their journey becoming objects of the museum as an icon of violence and suffering.¹¹⁹ As our exhumed artefacts have at //hapo.

The cabinets at //hapo containing the exhumed artefacts were recovered through the forensic work of the MPTT and in this sense, somewhat obviously, their memorialisation (the recovered artefacts once belonging to persons enforcedly disappeared and murdered by apartheid security police) is certainly mediated by the work of the forensic. It is not uncommon at the handover ceremonies that families donate some of the items found in the graves of their loved ones upon exhumation. For instance, Rousseau writes that,

On 23 March 2007, state officials returned the remains to families at a ceremony at Freedom Park, a key post-apartheid memorial site. Families of the four ultimately decided to bury only those segments that had been individually identified, while the remaining bone fragments as well as a jersey torn by the explosion, a shoe and socks

¹¹⁸ Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk, "Introduction: The Surviving Thing: Personal Objects in the Aftermath of Violence," *Journal of Material Culture* 25, no. 4 (2020), 383. See also Zoe Crossland, "Of Clues and Signs: The Dead Body and Its Evidential Traces," *American Anthropologist* 111, no. 1 (2009).

¹¹⁹ Zuzanna Dziuban and Ewa Stańczyk, "Introduction: The Surviving Thing: Personal Objects in the Aftermath of Violence," *Journal of Material Culture* 25, no. 4 (2020), 383. See also Katherine Verdery, "Observers Observed," *Anthropology Now* 4, no. 2 (2012): xx, doi:10.1080/19492901.2012.11728357.

were to be donated to Freedom Park for memorial display (personal communication).

This decision, motivated by demand for recognition of the specific horror of the deaths through display, offered a disconcerting reversal of the current removal of human remains from museum and memorial sites.¹²⁰

Two points are worth pointing out here. The first relates to the wider moment of return that is seeing museums in Europe that hold human skeletal remains as part of their collection faced with calls for the return thereof.¹²¹ Restitution is part of the postcolonial engagement and active work to dismantled and reckon with the consequences of colonisation.¹²² Restitution is a process of return that is both an ethical practice of the museum but also a project of restoring dignity and justice to those who have been denied so, through the violence of colonisation and apartheid. Not only is restitution about the return of artefacts but it is also concerned with human remains being repatriated to the society of their origin. It is also about ethical practice becoming embedded into practices of the museum which was crafted out of extreme violence, and which has practices and categories that repeated violence.

The second point relates to questions about the display of artefacts connected to extreme violence being openly displayed within museum exhibitions. Rousseau highlights the decline of display of “human remains from museum and memorials sites”. The long history of unethical

¹²⁰ Nicky Rousseau, "The Farm, the River and the Picnic Spot: Topographies of Terror," *African Studies* 68, no. 3 (2009), 364.

¹²¹ Ciraj Rassool, "Re-storing the Skeletons of Empire: Return, Reburial and Rehumanisation in Southern Africa," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41, no. 3 (2015), 653.

¹²² Ciraj Rassool and Victoria E. Gibbon, "Restitution versus repatriation: Terminology and concepts matter," *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* 184, no. 1 (2023), 1.

acquisition of human remains, does position such exhumed artefacts in a precarious position.

This question of the lines of exhibition display of artefacts recovered from graves cannot simply be transferred from the human (remains) but I would argue that due to the complex nature of coincidental meaning making that it cannot be outright dismissed either.

And, as I present through photographic evidence below, the artefacts donated (not the remaining bone fragments) by the families of the four Mamelodi activists are hidden/missed in the cabinet draws. In the case of the artefacts at //hapo, the human remains have been reburied by the families but these artefacts have not. They are catalogued within the larger artefacts and objects that the //hapo museum can choose to display and exhibit.

‘Excavation and Exhumation’

Here I offer an exhumation (of sorts) of the contents of the display cabinets. I present this exhumation through photographs sent to me by Mr. Badresh Kara.

*The left sided drawer of the cabinet contains one text panel and a number of recovered artefacts, including clothing and bullet fragments:

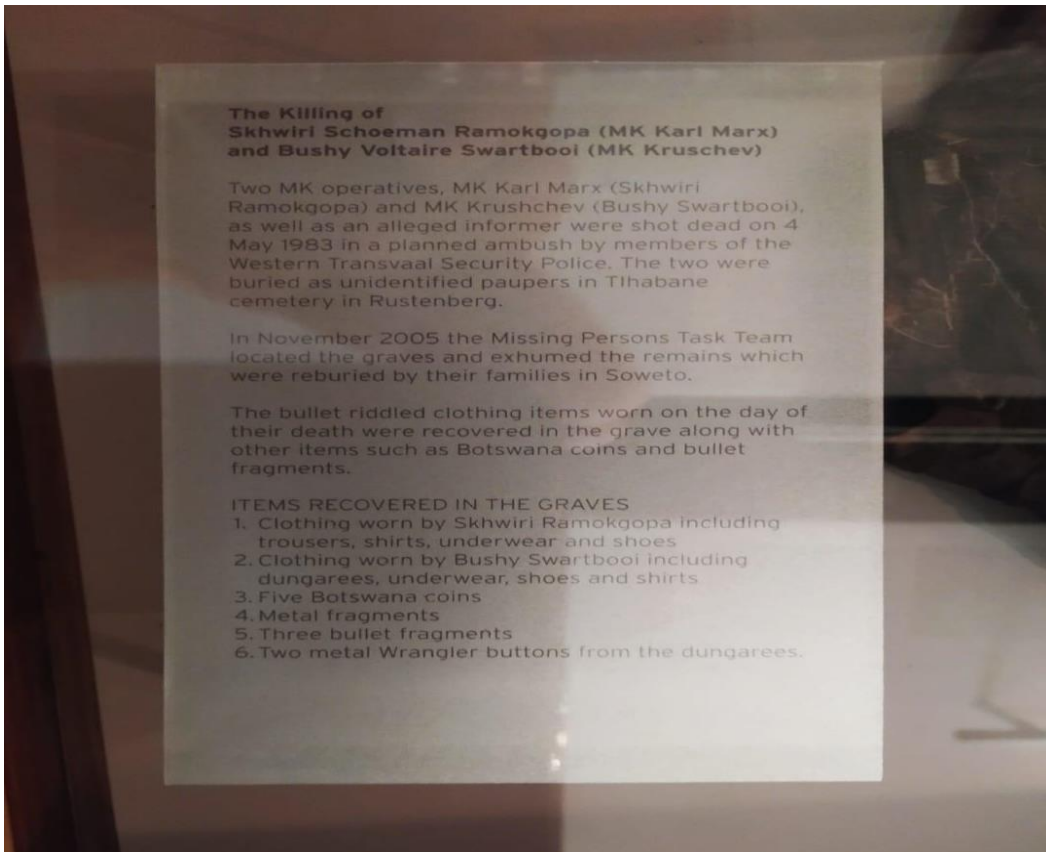


Figure 9 Photograph taken by Bradresh Kara in 2023 of the contents of the right-side display cabinet and Figure 10 Photograph taken by Nicola Pretorius in 2023 of the text panel which resides in the same right-side display cabinet which resides in the same display cabinet.

The Killing of Skhwiri Schoeman Ramokgopa (MK Karl Marx) and Bushy Voltaire Swartbooi (MK Krushev)

Two MK operatives, MK Karl Marx (Skhwiri Ramokgopa) and MK Krushev (Bushy Swartbooi), as well as an alleged informer were shot dead on 4 May 1983 in a planned ambush by members of the Western Transvaal Security Police. The two were buried as unidentified paupers in Tlhabane cemetery in Rustenberg.

In November 2005 the Missing Persons Task Team located the graves and exhumed the remains which were reburied by their families in Soweto.

The bullet riddled clothing items worn on the day of their death were recovered in the grave along with other items such as Botswana coins and bullet fragments.

ITEMS RECOVERED IN THE GRAVES

1. Clothing worn by Skhwiri Ramokgopa including trousers, shirts, underwear and shoes
2. Clothing worn by Bushy Swartbooi including dungarees, underwear, shoes and shirts
3. Five Botswana coins
4. Metal fragments
5. Three bullet fragments
6. Two metal Wrangler buttons from the dungarees

*The right sided drawer contains two text panels and a number of exhumed artefacts.



Figure 11 Photograph taken by Bradresh Kara in 2023 of the contents of the display cabinet

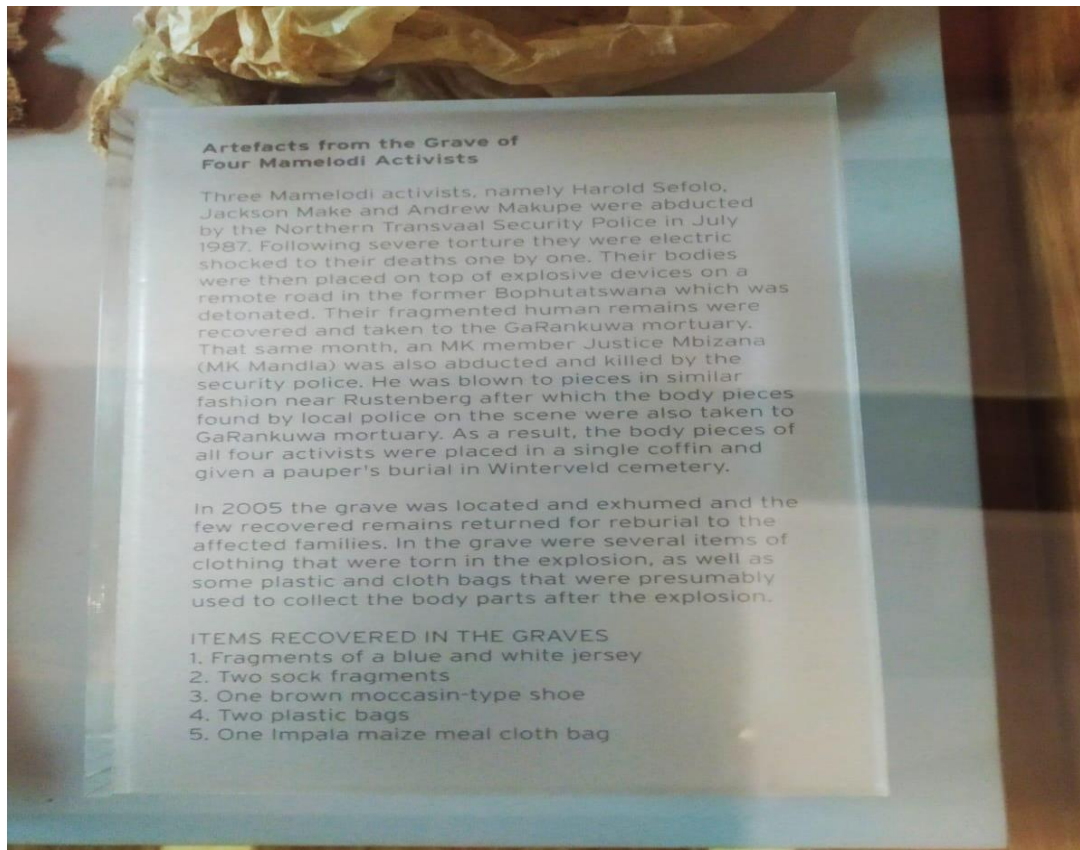


Figure 12 Photograph taken by Nicola Pretorius in 2023 of the text panel which resides in the same display cabinet as figure 11.

Artefacts from the Graves of Four Mamelodi Activists

Three Mamelodi activists, namely Harold Sefolo, Jackson Make and Andrew Makupe were abducted by the Northern Transvaal Security Police in July 1987. Following severe torture they were electric shocked to their deaths one by one. Their bodies were then placed on top of explosive devices on a remote road in the former Bophutatswana¹²³ which was detonated. Their fragmented human remains were recovered and taken to the GaRankuwa mortuary. That same month, an MK member Justice Mbizana (MK Mandla) was also abducted and killed by the security police. He was blown to pieces in similar fashion near Rustenberg after which the body pieces found by local police on the scene were also taken to GaRankuwa mortuary. As a result,

¹²³ This is the spelling exactly, which differs from the official spelling Bophuthatswana.

the body pieces of all four activist were places in a single coffin and given a pauper's burial in Winterveld cemetery.

In 2005 the grave was located and exhumed and the few recovered remains returned for reburial to the affected families. In the grave were several items of clothing that were torn in the explosion, as well as some plastic and cloth bags that were presumably used to collect the body parts after the explosion.

ITEMS RECOVERED IN GRAVES

1. Fragments of a blue and white jersey
2. Two sock fragments
3. One brown moccasin-type shoe
4. Two plastic bags
5. One impala maize meal cloth bag

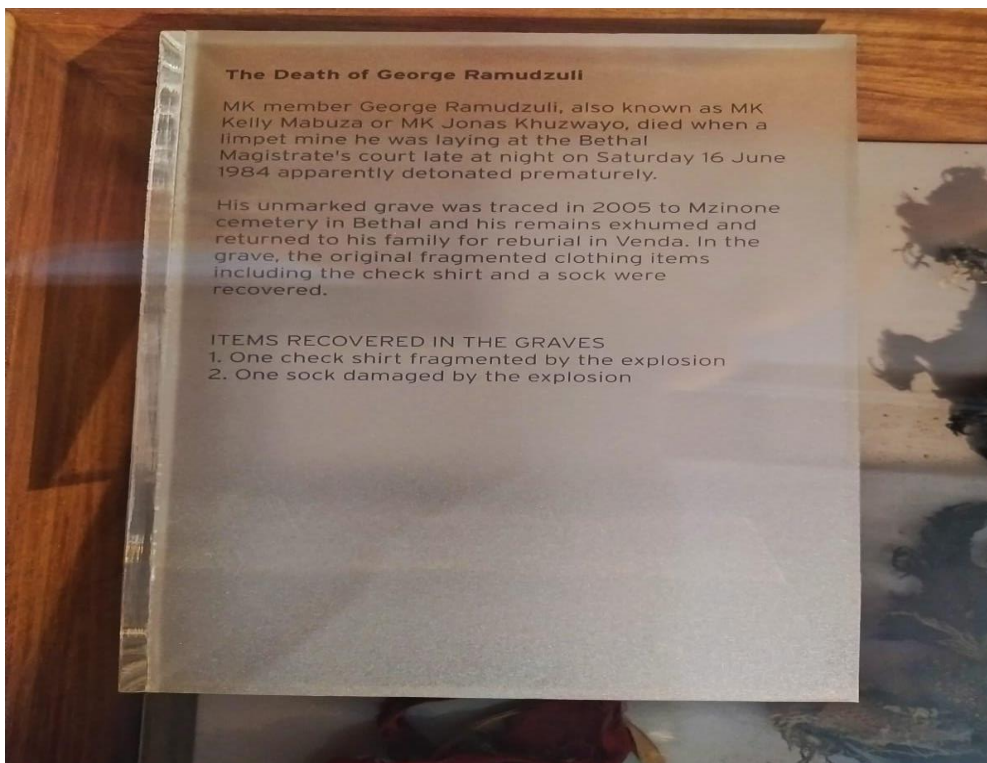


Figure 13 Photograph by Bradresh Kara in 2023 of the text panel that resides in the left side display cabinet and accompanies exhumed artefacts in Figure 12.

The Death of George Ramudzuli

MK member George Ramudzuli, also known as MK Kelly Mabuza or MK Jonas Khuzwayo, died when a limpet mine he was laying at the Bethal Magistrates court late at night on Saturday 16 June 1984 apparently detonated prematurely.

His unmarked grave was traced in 2005 to Mzinone cemetery in Bethal and his remains exhumed and returned to his family for reburial in Venda. In the grave, the original fragmented clothing items including the check shirt and a sock were recovered.

ITEMS RECOVERED IN THE GRAVES

1. One check shirt fragmented by the explosion
2. One sock damaged by the explosion

It is important to highlight the MA thesis by Michele Jacobs, as her thesis shows parts of the display cabinets, opened and showing the artefacts. Her research concerns how in South Africa the architecture of heritage sites have been produced in accordance with a post-colonial policy which Jacobs argues does situate the old colonial monuments of the apartheid in conversation with the newer developed heritage sites that aimed to reconfigure the past in an anti-apartheid manner. This is thought through several cases of monuments memorials like that of Nelson Mandela (face of the Struggle with which the antiapartheid sentiment is built) General Louis Botha and King Dinizulu and notably for this research, Freedom Park and the Voortrekker

monument. Jacobs, employs the use of Foucault heterotopia to analyse the //hapo museum model from an architectural lens.¹²⁴ Jacobs argues that, in accordance with Pompidou Centre in Paris as a prototype, the //hapo architecture is incongruent with its collection, and can be computer generated for any museum in the world, “like the Pompidou/Beaubourg, the //hapo museum ‘is a display of itself more than of its contents’, its contents fail to match the art of the building something which Baudrillard argues has become a model for galleries and museums such as Gehry’s Guggenheim in Bilbao and Libeskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin. (Hegarty 2008:325).”¹²⁵

These artefacts were display in a different manner in 2013 when photographed and described in Jacob’s work. In these the display cabinets are designated Body #1 and Body #2, with Body #1 identified in Jacobs’ work in another article in 2016, as Schwiri Schoeman Ramokgopa, MK: karl Mark and Body #2 Bushy Voltaire Swartbooi, MK: kruschev. In her thesis, the body #1 and Body #2 are not identified, rather remain unnamed.¹²⁶ Jacobs writes that, “The persons to whom the clothes belonged are unnamed and simply labelled Body # 1 and Body # 2...Just as the image of Hector Pieterse came to represent a collective group, so too the clothes of Body #1 and Body#2, transcend political allegiance and therefore represent symbolically a collective group, all those who disappeared and whose bodies have never been located.”¹²⁷ Jacobs argues that these museum objects have an authenticity that will negate the “temporal ravages of

¹²⁴ Michele E. Jacobs, "Contested Monuments in a Changing Heritage Landscape. The Interface between the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park, //Hapo Museum, Pretoria," (Unpublished Master's mini-thesis, University of KwaZulu- Natal, 2014), 119.

¹²⁵ Jacobs, "Contested Monuments," 138.

¹²⁶ Jacobs, "Contested Monuments," 137.

¹²⁷ Jacobs, "Contested Monuments," 138.

dialogue, contestation and reinterpretation”¹²⁸ The authenticity of the exhumed artefacts would override the conflicting interpretations in a way that none of the other exhibits could negate.

This is interesting to think through, as Jacobs wrote this in 2013, the contents of the cabinet has been reconfigured but not as she puts it, their authenticity. I would suggest that the artefacts contained in the drawers has been reconfigured from anonymous (in 2013) to named (in 2023). In 2023, when I visited the display cabinets did contain exhumed artefacts and text panels outlining some information pertained to exhumed artefacts that were in the possession of these individuals. This change between 2013 and 2023 is not indicated to the museum visitor, no “dilemma label” so to speak of in the exhibition display at //hapo itself. It is through an exhumation of the contents of the display cabinet that these changes have been highlighted. I would argue that the authenticity, as Michele Jacobs describes the artefacts, is difficult to react to, in accordance to the desire object when these cabinets are shut until requested opened.

‘Analysis’

The exhumed artefacts remain in the confines of the display cabinets at //hapo might suggest a closure for the families. However, this does not mean an end or finalisation of the afterlives of those categorised as missing. This afterlife takes on meaning from its creation and stands on display in accordance with the human remains and that specificity of the individual(s) as well as becoming a symbolic reference for all exhumed artefacts of the missing of apartheid state sanctioned violence. This is complicated however as the missing become part of a larger state

¹²⁸ Jacobs, "Contested Monuments," 136.

narrative which operates within its own agendas, but it also allows those (both directly impacted and not, i.e., visitors of the museum site) to ‘never forget’ what happened to these missing persons. The problem with these types of displays however, similar to that of the text panel ‘THE MISSING’ is that the exhumed artefacts of certain specific missing persons become the collective exhumed material remains, as happened in the Bosnia and Herzegovina aftermath of mass conflict and violence.

The artefacts exhumed alongside the remains of humans have a dynamic and electric relationship that cannot be simply dismissed when understanding the memorialisation initiatives produced. In the case of Bosnia, the exhumed objects were vital to the forensic process. The excavation and exhumation in these cases were vital at identification of individuals who went missing and their manner of death, which were both obscured by the actions sanctioned by mass conflict of the time. The Bosnian War, waged for four years and, “left the country and its society torn apart, with nearly 100,000 people dead and approximately 31,500 missing.”¹²⁹ This relationship between the human and exhumed artefacts creates opportunities to stand in for an aspect of the human remains. For example, the exhumed artefacts could in this case ‘step up’ in ways the human remains could not be allowed to, as the human remains became skeletal and thus unable to hold the cause of death, “as a result, the cause and manner of death in many cases hinged on the artefacts associated with the remains.”¹³⁰ The excavation and exhumation of human and non-human material exhumed artefacts become fundamentally bound together, which complicates such artefacts. Admir Jugo would argue that such artefacts go through a three-phase progression

¹²⁹ Admir Jugo, "Artefacts and personal effects from mass graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina," *Les Cahiers Irice* N° 19, no. 2 (2017): 23.

¹³⁰ Jugo, "Artefacts and personal effects," 27.

of “object - artefact – relic” which binds the non-human materials.¹³¹ In other words, these exhumed materials at //hapo in the draws of the cabinets would be categorised as a “relic”, according to Jugo’s categorisation. I would argue that the exhumed objects, in all their materiality, within the display cabinets at //hapo have become meaningful and valuable by their association and have shifted through categorisations. I would argue that the category of “relic” is helpful in understanding the exhumed artefacts at //hapo, to a certain extent. The manner in which the exhumed artefacts be understood to better extent is the “desire object” and instead would like to consider the “desire object” in relation to the display cabinets contents more applicable to //hapo. While “relic” does work to a certain extent, I suggest that “desire object” is more apt to the exhumed artefacts at //hapo in the display cabinets.

Lea Davids argues for the label of “desire objects” to categories objects found at site of mass violence and atrocities.¹³² The objects reflect desires of the loved ones to whom they once belonged. Davids argues that “desire objects” is a category, that is defined by conditions of unnatural death, that the “desire object” connects the killed with their murder and lastly that the object gives a direct connection to the crime scene and the violence is still a part of living memory.¹³³ This is because, according to Davids,

Desire objects create their own sensory habitat, both physically, through constructing a material world with its own set of sensory properties, and culturally, through emphasising and valuing certain types of sense impressions over others...Through those features, desire objects gain their social value which goes beyond the singular significance they

¹³¹ Jugo, "Artefacts and personal effects," 38.

¹³² Lea David, "A Shoe, a Broken Watch, and Marbles How Objects Shape Our Memory and Our Future," *S: I. M. O. N: Intervention. Methods. Documentation.* 9, no. 22 (2022): 91.

¹³³ David, "A Shoe, Broken Watch," 91.

possess for the family of the deceased, becoming artefacts of worth for a wider community.¹³⁴

This is due to the shift in value from the private to the public sphere where the value is to the collective and to be made sense by the audience. The “desire object” becomes, according to Davids, an authentic witness to the event of violence which has value to the audience. This is the shift from private, as a direct link connecting to the left behind loved one and into the wider public sphere which does in turn change the emotional charge of the (desire) object.¹³⁵ In other words, the emotional charge is paramount to the “desire object” and to effecting the audience and in our case, the effectiveness of the display cabinets that is the question of this chapter.

The display drawers are closed until actively opened which does impact the effectiveness of the emotional impact of the exhumed artefacts. I would suggest that these artefacts can be thought of in relation to a “desire object” but ultimately falling outside of the boundary of an effective and affective “desire object”. This is purely due to the effect of the artefact being materially bound by a closed drawer and thus shut to the museum visitor. I suggest to repurpose the “museum-cemetery” concept by Zuzanna Dzuiban which can make clear the imagery of the cabinet as a coffin and the text panel of ‘THE MISSING’ as a gravestone.

¹³⁴ David, "A Shoe, Broken Watch," 98 -101.

¹³⁵ David, "A Shoe, Broken Watch," 104.



Figure 14 Screenshot from the virtual tour, cropped for clarity.

The display cabinets are shaped and reminiscent of a coffin, from this angle of the 360 virtual tour of //hapo which puts the text panel not as an awkward placement but as deliberate in connection to the coffin/cabinet, as seen in figure 14. I would suggest then thinking of these two display elements together as a resting place, as grave, for the exhumed artefacts, which can be usefully discussed through the concept of the “museum-cemetery”.

Dzuiban is concerned with museums as structures of violence. The sites of these museums are that of former concentration camps, which contain many human remains.¹³⁶ Dzuiban uses the concept of “violence continuum” to investigate the reproduced antisemitism and violence specific to Polish lives during the Holocaust and to Polish afterlives and human remains in these

¹³⁶ Zuzanna Dziuban, "Museum-Cemetery: (Infra)Structural Violence Against Human Remains," *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* 34, no. 1 (2023): 187-189.

new museums, wherein the violence is continued without cease.¹³⁷ Dzuiban argues that Polish afterlives are dynamic and their ‘resting’ place within these former concentration camp sites have been categorised in one of two ways (via either trauma or nature), and they instead should be thought of as the “museum-cemeteries”.¹³⁸

This “museum-cemetery” is both concept and category, which creates a practice but also a space that re-figures the dead within that dynamic space and within political and historiographical charged ways. It is a dynamic political space for the dead to be made/ unmade and through which their death can be processed and reconfigured. This dynamic space is at play at //hapo, at this epoch in which the text panel, ‘THE MISSING’ and the display cabinet are located. Therefore, in my usage, the return to the physical space and site, is not in the same way as Dzuiban. To go back to *forensis*, I would argue that the site and space can also be understood as the field and forum. The space of the museum-cemetery is the material representative of structural violence as well as societal values.¹³⁹ Therefore it is infrastructure that allows for reconfiguration and process of the past at these museum sites. Within this framework then, I suggest we can use the cabinets and text panel as a single instance of a museum-cemetery within an exhibition designed to represent death as the ultimate sacrifice towards freedom. In this sense it is the artefacts rather than the dead physical human remains that are re-figured and remade in a dynamic political and historical manner, and this is representative of the societal narratives and hierarchy. In other words, the exhumed artefacts are inscribed into the larger political and historical narrative of the

¹³⁷ Dzuiban, "Museum-Cemetery," 189.

¹³⁸ Dzuiban, "Museum-Cemetery," 192.

¹³⁹ Dzuiban, "Museum-Cemetery," 192.

sixth epoch concerned with the armed liberation struggle. In doing so, I would suggest, it makes clear the imagery of the cabinet drawers as coffin and the text panel as gravestone. In a way this dynamic political and historical making and unmaking of the artefacts, also works to both rest and unrest the missing persons of apartheid, disrupting their afterlives but in an attempt to memorialise them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have executed an exhumation (of sorts) by excavation of the display cabinets in epoch six of the //hapo museum. I have highlighted the non reproduction of the ‘WE WILL NEVER FORGET’ text stand not presented on the virtual 360 tour. The exhumed artefacts in in the display cabinets, as shown in figures 9 to 13, are also not presented in the virtual 360 tour which is a critical oversight. I have aimed to follow the exhumation practices, by preliminary investigations which locate these artefacts within the cabinet in epoch six, at //hapo. Then I found specifically, the contents of the display cabinets (figures 9 – 13). Through an exhumation I have investigated what lies within the cabinet. In regard to the categorisation of the exhumed material objects, they can be categorised in multiple ways, including “relics” (Jugo), grave goods or as I explored “desire objects”, as discussed by Lea Davids. However, the effectiveness of “desire object” does rely on the emotional impact of the exhumed materials which is hampered by the closed display cabinet. In this way, the forensic has mediated the memorialisation at //hapo through exhumation and the presence of exhumed materials incorporated in the //hapo epoch six.

As noted earlier in this chapter, a big crutch of the TRC investigations is the reliance of perpetrators testimony to find and recover the remains of missing individuals. Next to the display drawers there is a stand which names only the perpetrators of the crimes but not the individuals identified in the closed display cabinets. The MPTT investigated, found and exhumed and returned the remains of George Ramudzui in 2005.¹⁴⁰ Also in 2005, the grave of Harold Sefolo, Jackson Make and Andrew Makupe, who were tortured together were placed in the same coffin as Justice Mbizana (MK Mandla) were recovered by the MPTT. In 2005, the MPTT located the graves of Skhwiri Schoeman Ramokgopa (MK Karl Marx) and Bushy Voltaire Swartbooi (MK Kruschew) and they were reburied by their families in Soweto. It is ironic then that the eight names of those ‘WE WELL NEVER FORGET’ are not named on the text stand outside of the display cabinets but the one preparator is. I argue that the exhibition needs to be rethought through the connection between the ‘THE MISSING’ text panel and the display cabinets needs to be more explicitly linked to each other.

It is through thinking about the cabinets as coffin and the text panel as a gravestone, that this connection can make clear that which has been proved by through the concept of the “museum-cemetery”. This “museum-cemetery” confines but also potentially remakes the afterlives of the artefacts. In becoming a “museum -cemetery” for the exhumed artefacts, the missing persons of apartheid are memorialised in ways that disrupt their rest in order to remember and thus in order to memorialise them.

¹⁴⁰ DV, "Zoutnet | News | "Fearless Commander" Laid to Rest," Welcome to Zoutnet, accessed December 10, 2024, <https://www.zoutnet.co.za/articles/news/4669/2006-09-29/fearless-commander-laid-to-rest>.

The Display Cabinets remain (mostly) closed

If the text panel changed places to a more prominent position, would this mini-thesis be for nothing? I would argue that while the geographical location of the text panel plays a role in the oversight I have explored in this mini-thesis, a location does not null the discussion that has taken place in this mini-thesis. Instead, the location, and thus my experience in not seeing the text panel and turning back has illuminated the several ways that missing persons are mediated at the //hapo museum. The //hapo museum site at Freedom Park has been the focus of analysis in this work. I have explored the origins and framework that produced //hapo interpretive museum. The //hapo is produced in the aftermath of apartheid and it is a readdress of the past and past narratives. The museum has changed and in //hapo the knowledge production has aimed to a create a collective cohesive identity. The //hapo museum has a virtual 360 tour that is in line with trends that have seen a spike in the rise of the virtual exhibit. In exploring the physical //hapo sit alongside, my memory as witness and in reference to the virtual tour we have shown that while there are possibilities to the virtual tour there are limitations, the virtual tour of //hapo is seemingly bound by and to the physical site and tour.

The central pillar of this work has been the image of the text panel, titled 'THE MISSSING'. In order to investigate the accounts inscribed upon the text panel, we have seen that the forensic has emerged in two particular ways. This is the categorisation of missing and through the practice of exhumations. The exhumations have been done first by the TRC and later by the MPTT, in investigations that are not done yet. The other essential shift has been the shift away from

witness testimony towards the emphasis on material evidence as it enters the forum, like that of the legal court room but also other public flexible forums such as the TRC. Through the exploration of forensic, we arrive at the practice of *forensis*, which I have used to think through the text panel as forum. A public site that is where evidence is presented and mediated. The forum, as per Weizman, shifts between the site objects or site, the interpretation and the public gathering and thus one can think through the text panel as the forum shifting between elements.¹⁴¹ The evidence has been interpreted and mediated by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as well as by the exhibition design of the //hapo (museum site). The text panel casts as forum as it is a public space where the results of the investigation (the field) is then presented and potentially contested. This work is thus a discussion of the text panel and thus a forum. The text panel is thus mediated and is always under mediation, it is unsettled and not fixed.

The wishes of the loved ones of those who had been forcibly disappeared desperately seek their loved ones lives and sacrifices acknowledged. The drawers contain artefacts found by the MPTT are in mostly shut drawers, which means they are present but not on constant display – for sensitivity reasons. However, the //hapo museum does not shy away from the brutality and violence that has been the foundation of this nation. In fact, the several conflicts that shaped southern Africa, including the Khoisan genocide, pre-colonial and colonial conflicts and the fight against apartheid are where the names are pulled from in the wall of names placements. Thus, I argue that violence and its influence impact on the events of the past, is a part of the story telling happening at this //hapo museum and Freedom Park Heritage site. The layout design of the text

¹⁴¹ Eyal Weizman, "Introduction: Forensis," in *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 10.

panel and the cabinet display speaks to the uncomfortable and delicate work of memorialising the missing persons of the apartheid era. The geographical placement of the text panel, in terms of the wider exhibit design, is less awkwardly placed when connected to the cabinet display, the exhumed artefacts and understanding them as coffin and gravestone. However, I want to argue that those missing persons of apartheid and the uncertainty that will always follow such horrific acts of violence, the ambiguity is represented by awkwardness of 'THE MISSING' text panel and the display cabinets at the //hapo museum site at Freedom Park heritage Site. The need here is for an indicator or acknowledgment from the museum curators. The effectiveness of the display in the cabinets relies on the emotional impact of the exhumed materials which is hampered by the closed display cabinet. In this way, the forensic has heavily mediated the memorialisation at //hapo through exhumation and the presence of exhumed materials incorporated in the //hapo epoch six. This is exemplified by the donated clothes, the exhumed artefacts, that are stored in the display cabinets in epoch 6.

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