How to see the South African black people in Santu Mofokeng's image-text archive?[1]

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Abstract: South African artist Santu Mofokeng's The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890–1950 (1997) displays black people's photographic portraits and text through a slide projection. For this archive project, he collected, restored, and re-contextualized the old portraits and added text. The presented figures depict the black South Africans who lived at the end of the nineteenth century. Most of them are wearing European style dresses and taking a pose in a studio. Different from the well-prepared photographic representation, pieces of text include a disorder of alphabets, varied size of letters, inconsistent ground color, and misprinting effect. In a sense, the ambivalent mode of images and text seems to appeal the black people's inner conflicts between being modernized versus colonized. In fact, Mofokeng once said that such a middle-class of black people did not exist in his education. Thus, this research analyzes the ways in which intertextuality of images and text in The Black Photo Album fills with the incomplete part of South African history. Reconsidering the functional limits of the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 1995) in South Africa, this research suggests the ways in which Mofokeng's archive project delivers emotions of memories of the black people, which were not registered in the nation's history.
Keywords: Santu Mofokeng; apartheid; intertextuality; archive; emotions of history

[es] ¿Cómo ver a las personas negras sudafricanas en el archivo de imágenes y texto de Santu Mofokeng?

Resumen: El álbum de fotos negro—mírame: 1890–1950 (1997) de Santu Mofokeng muestra retratos fotográficos y texto de personas negras a través de una proyección de diapositivas. Para este proyecto de archivo, recopiló, restauró y recontextualizó antiguos retratos, añadiendo texto. Las figuras presentadas representan a los sudafricanos negros que vivieron a finales del siglo XIX. La mayoría de ellos llevan vestidos de estilo europeo y posan en un estudio. A diferencia de la representación fotográfica cuidadosamente preparada, el texto incluye un desorden de alfabetos, tamaños variados de letras, color de fondo inconsistente y efectos de impresión errónea. En cierto sentido, el modo ambivalente de imágenes y texto parece apelar a los conflictos internos de los negros entre ser modernizados y colonizados. De hecho, Mofokeng dijo una vez que tal clase media de personas negras no existía en su educación. Así, esta investigación analiza las formas en que la intertextualidad de imágenes y texto en El álbum de fotos negro llena la parte incompleta de la historia sudafricana. Al reconsiderar los límites funcionales de la Comisión para la Verdad y la Reconciliación (1995, TRC por sus siglas en inglés) en Sudáfrica, este estudio sugiere las formas en que el proyecto de archivo de Mofokeng transmite emociones y recuerdos de las personas negras que no fueron registradas en la historia de la nación.
Palabras clave: Santu Mofokeng; apartheid; intertextualidad; archivo; emociones de la historia.

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1. Introduction

Figure. 1. Santu Mofokeng, *The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890–1950,* slide no. 8, 1997.
Black and white photograph, slide projection, varied size.
(Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

Two unidentified black women stare at us (Fig. 1). This photograph is from an image-text archive *The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890–1950* (1997) by the late South African artist Santu Mofokeng (1956–2020). For the archive project, he travelled Soweto, Bethlehem, and the former Republic of Bophuthatswana, and collected the old portraits that had been discarded or neglected in black families' houses (Campbell, 2013). As one of the portraits, the photo depicts two women wearing European-style dresses and ornaments. Taken at the end of the nineteenth century, they look different from Africans as widely circulated through ethnographic photographs at the time. But the women's tensed look indicates that displaying their identity in front of a camera in that manner is unfamiliar to them. The photo herein seems to entail the layered narratives of their racial tensions and senses of black identities that were contested at that time (Lee, 2008). Contradictory parts of their lives seem to be veiled by whether their Westernized appearance was considered modernized or colonized during their lifetimes. One text by Mofokeng epitomizes this concept: "Are these images evidence of mental colonization?"

Mofokeng photographed black people's lives in the apartheid— and post-apartheid era in South Africa through documentary practices for forty years. Very often than not, his works were considered to represent the sublime of their lives in difficult times. But *The Black Photo Album* is a bit different—it provides a lens to see the never-ending contradictions rooted in history in postcolonial discourses. The contradictions are: current political issues are concerned with history, yet history education is often politicized; some native people who helped colonizers gained their own fortunes, yet government-level compensation never heals the majority of historical trauma. These colonial experiences are common in a once colonized nation rather than limited to a specific area. As such, Mofokeng once sought for shared histories by exploring the sites of other nations imbued with historical trauma such as Auschwitz concentration camp. Thus my look at Mofokeng's *The Black Photo Album* discusses how the colonial experiences would be shared and further *felt* by international audience.

The Black Photo Album displays thirty-five photographic portraits of black people and forty-five pieces of text through a slide projection. Previous scholarship has dealt with this project focusing on Mofokeng's inquiry of the old portraits or his words on text upon the binary of black and white. But different from them, this research features distinct points. Examining how the photographed figures represent their historical positions, I explore the concepts of *ambivalence* rather than binary. In relation to the concept, I focus on *sensorial effects*—not textual meanings—of the text to demonstrate how Mofokeng delivers the inner conflict of black South Africans between being modernized versus colonized. Then I examine the reconciliation process of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and pinpoint its failure to register *emotions* imbedded in memories of black people in the nation's history. Ultimately, this research asserts that Mofokeng explores to what degree postcolonial discourse is expanded to general human life beyond national or ethnic borders.

2. Ambivalent Bodies in the Grey Zone

Diverging from his typical work, Mofokeng collected, restored, and recontextualized old portraits and added text to complete *The Black Photo Album*. The photographed subjects depict the urban middle— and working-class of black South Africans from the end of the nineteenth century. Most of them are wearing Victorian-style dresses and taking a pose in a studio, and their names are identified because the photographs were

made upon their self-commission. Mofokeng asserted that the African subjects borrowed a model from colonial officials and settlers, especially the British (Mofokeng, 2013b). This statement thus provokes a critical suspicion: as he asked, were certain black South Africans captured by bourgeois delusion to support white rule ensuring their own fortunes? (Mofokeng, 1996)

Most of the portraits are dated from the 1890s to the 1920s, which adds a complexity to understanding the photographed subjects. Black people in South Africa suffered from continuous European occupation during those times. The opening of diamond fields in Kimberley (1869) and the subsequent discovery of gold in Witwatersrand (1886) raised conflict between the British and Boers that eventually led to the two Anglo-Boer Wars, the first from 1880 to 1881 and the second from 1899 to 1902. In addition, the Berlin Conference in 1884 allowed the British to gain legal ownership of land across South Africa. Moreover, the Natives Land Act—the first major legislation on racial segregation and the cornerstone of South Africa's notorious migrant labor system—was established in 1913.

Given this context, viewers might wonder how to see the historical positions of the photographed subjects in *The Black Photo Album* via Mofokeng's artistic strategies. Because the indigenous peoples' gaze was not disciplined by images, photography might register all possible elements, which moved away from the legitimized and normalized frameworks in Western societies, opting for a broad incorporation of contextual elements as constitutive of the identities (Martin-Barbero and Corona, 2017. p. 121). For instance, the aforementioned portrait of the two women is projected on a wall in near lifelike size through a slide projection.[2] Since the women face viewers, a reciprocal gaze is established. And the following text that asks "Who is gazing?" encourages a sense of communication between the women and viewers. The pair's awkward poses and facial expressions, however, prevent viewers from full understanding of the women. Viewers thus oscillate between a sense of connection to and estrangement from the women.

Figure. 2. Santu Mofokeng, *Police with Sjambok. Plein Street, Johannesburg*, ca. 1986.
Silver gelatin print. (Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

Mofokeng's interest in gaze is shown in another photograph of his *Police with Sjambok. Plein Street, Johannesburg*, ca. 1986 (Fig. 2). At first glance, the work depicts around thirty white police officers armed with *sjamboks* (whips), weapons associated with apartheid and related to the history of slavery. These officers seem to be facing a group of young black protesters against apartheid on the other side of the street. Here, the work seemingly captures the officers in a moment of pose and delay, though the ensuing confrontation will likely end in brutality. Yet a few black officers wearing more conventional uniforms are situated behind their white counterparts. The black officers, who seemingly assisted the white ones, seem to hold authority different from their black compatriots.

These two photographs play with gaze and its relation to the spectator's position. Viewers of *Police with Sjambok* are likely considered insiders in solidarity with anti-apartheid protesters, but those of *The Black Photo Album* seem like outsiders on the scene. Nevertheless, both cases invoke a degree of ambiguity vis-a-vis social position and race. With *Police with Sjambok*, viewers can imagine the conflict between the black officers and black protesters. The photo was taken in the mid-1980s, the peak of South Africa's rebellion against apartheid, and international media covered clashes between black people in South Africa (Cowell, 1985; Parks, 1985). In 1985, *The Gazette, Montreal* wrote:

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[2] The projection size varies depending upon the exhibition space. One of the best exhibitions of this project occurred in 2013 at Tate Modern, London. There, the projection was relatively large, the room was painted grey, and there was only one entrance, which provided an intimate viewing experience. The projected image at Tate Modern was 277 x 370 cm (3:4), meaning that some of the portraits' figures were life-size. This information was obtained via e-mail with the curator at Tate Modern in London and the Walther Collection in New York City in March 2015.

> As a policeman, he [Templeton Sibasa] has become an enemy to his people. [...] The South African police force has 20,000 blacks, almost half the force. [...] The youth say that the black policemen are informers who tell the white policemen whom to shoot. [...] The youth say they will kill the black policemen (The Gazette Montreal Staff, 1985. July 22).

Here, the binary between insiders and outsiders or black and white people becomes ambiguous in *Police with Sjambok*. Similarly in *The Black Photo Album*, the question of the text "Who is gazing?" asks viewers directly to consider who holds the power to control, desire, and appropriation to see others (Lacan, 2007). Because the two black women were photographed around the late 1890s or early 1900s when South Africa was under European colonial rule, the question challenges the period's colonial eyes in which African subjects mostly remained objects rather than subjects of gaze. And through the text, the two women seem to reclaim their own gaze to see what happened in their land. In short, both works break the stereotype of black and white people and accentuate how South African history has been simplified and remains *incomplete*.

Through Mofokeng's artistic strategies, the incompleteness of South African history is likely felt by viewers. First, both photographs place their subjects at the center of the frames, eschewing closeup, distant, or exaggerated views. As a result, both works express conceptual neutrality toward the subjects by creating a space to discuss a broader relationship beyond the black and white dichotomy. Second, they provide a buffer that viewers can situate themselves in a given context. *Police with Sjambok* suggests delayed violence or the potential for a plethora of final scenes to develop, and *The Black Photo Album* changes slides every five seconds, which prod viewers to recontextualize their relationship with the photographed subjects. In this way, both works help viewers reconsider their own position by proposing "de-centered subjectivity."

I use the term "de-centered subjectivity" as a concept of a subjectivity that is formed without a fully present center and continuously gets constructed and dispersed. In this context, such a subjectivity eventually evokes self-producing splits in a self that makes possible both the alienation of and resistance to a racial hierarchy or dichotomy (Dimen, 1992). Particularly in *The Black Photo Album*, viewers are asked to reposition themselves regarding the black subjects whose identities are ambiguous, which place the viewers' subjectivities in the tornal spectrum between black and white. Tamar Garb argued that black men began dressing in European clothing in the 1870s in Kimberley, which means black people were capable of moving from traditional Africans to "modern" Europeans (Garb, 2013). But because the way in which black people in the project were considered at the time is clear, viewers' interaction with the subjects helps reimagine racial conflict, division, or instability. Here, a conflict or paradox centered on race is extrapolated rather than negotiated or subsumed (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), and this is what Mofokeng's image-text archive reveals.

According to James T. Campbell, select photographed subjects in *The Black Photo Album* show cultural elites such as Jacobus Gilead Xaba. As the son of Christian converts, he led the African Methodist Episcopal Church and later moved to the United States to dedicate himself to translating African hymnbooks. In one image of Xaba, he acts as a witness for a couple's marriage and in another, his family portrait imitates a typical European one. As a social intellectual, Xaba's gorgeous suite might be said to an agency of visual struggles against racism and inequality, as it happened in groups of African missionaries around that time (Rich, 2015). But Campbell emphasized that "educated Africans became the objects of ridicule and contempt, pretenders to a status they could never own, children preening in their parents' clothes (Campbell, 2013, p.7)." Still, the European lifestyle of African subjects who appear in *The Black Photo Album* looked absurd to people of that time.

Campbell's statement reminds of Foucault's historical methodology. He wrote, "At any given moment, there is always only one *episteme* that defines the conditions of possibility of all knowledge, whether expressed in a theory or silently invested in a practice (Foucault, 1970, p.168)." As such, the Africans' adoption of European clothing would entail an absurd look to the theories or practices in the nineteenth century's possible knowledge. According to Bhabha, the configuration of postcolonial countries' past must mediate the "teleology of progress that falls into the timeless discourse of irrationality" and the "archaic ambivalence that informs the time of modernity (Bahbah, 1994, p.142)." Indeed, such absurdity likely stems from the struggles of black South Africans between being modernized and colonized. To overcome European designation of the uncivilized seeking their own freedom (Dodd, 2015), Africans adapted European modernization in colonial times. Here, Mofokeng did not judge the historical positions of black ancestors but instead experimented with how the debate might be publicized to contemporary international viewers by debuting his project in 1997 at the Johannesburg Biennale.

3. Text as Instrument for Listening and Touching

Mofokeng's thoughts on the historical positions of black South Africans might be more complicated in *The Black Photo Album* than *Police with Sjambok* because with the former, he tackled the topic of ancestors, something he was never taught. He wrote, "These solemn images of middle— and working-class black families [...] portray a class of black people which, according to my education, did not exist at the time that they were made (Mofokeng, 2000)." The history he unearthed in his research for *The Black Photo Album* has been largely obscured for his generation, thus he was confronted with unknown parts of South African history when he initiated the project.

Mofokeng's work for *The Black Photo Album* entailed restoring original photographs, a process that made him as a diligent historian who revitalized lost history and memories. The original photographs were scanned, enhanced, and retouched using Adobe Photoshop, and later transferred on to 200-line-per-inch screen negatives. Then the contact prints were produced to normal photographic printings (Mofokeng, 2013a). Okwui Enwezor wrote, "Rather than aesthetic interventions on the images to prove a point as author, Mofokeng has instead, except for restoring the images, left the photographs as they are (Enwezor, 1997, p.30)." This view applies to image, but text are more complicated.

In *The Black Photo Album*, image comprises evidence of Mofokeng's historical research while text demonstrate his interpretative intervention. He recontextualized the found portraits by adding text, and not only provided questions or information but represented *formal imperfections* like incorrect spelling, changes to size and styles of text, and tonal differences in ground. These appear when the project is shown via a slide projection as well as a book, so the representation of formal imperfections is very intentional. Here, his restoration processes for image showed his prudence, yet such formal imperfections in text appear like mistakes. His opposite attitude shown through image versus text thus suggest ambivalence rather than ambiguity in tandem, working diligently for truth telling while simultaneously producing mistakes.

The portrait of Elliot Phakane and the following text demonstrate such ambivalence. The frame of this portrait is cut off from the original image, leaving the photographed figure in the background (Fig. 3). On the original image, Mofokeng cleaned major stains and spots to restore the portrait, enhancing its quality. The portrait displays a young man wearing a nice suit who looks elegant as he leans on a banister with his right arm and places his left hand in a pocket. On the left side of the back wall are a painted window and curtain that connect to a column of the banister to provide a stable composition. Referring to the diagonals created by his crossed legs, curtain, and the interplay of shadow and light, Jennifer Bajorek wrote, "Each element refers to the others with such perfect symmetry and balance […] We suspect, *the impression of formal perfection* affects our impression of the young man's character (Bajorek, 2013, p.224)."
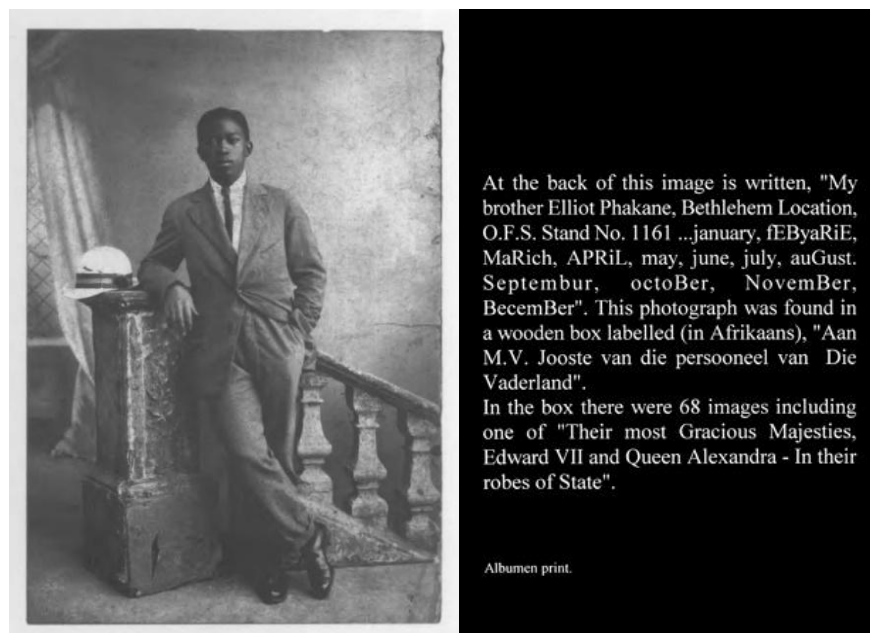

Figure. 3 & 4. Santu Mofokeng, *The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890—1950*, slide no. 21 & 22, 1997.
Black and white photograph, slide projection, varied size.
(Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

In contrast to such a perfectly composed image, the following text indicates how Mofokeng exposed veiled parts of Phakane (Fig. 4). Mofokeng said the sentences begin with, "My brother Elliot Phakane, Bethlehem Location, O. F. S. Stand No 1161 …january, fEByaRiE, MaRich […] Septembur, octoBer, NovemBer, BecemBer." Indeed, Mofokeng seemed to have no interference in transferring spelling, and the next sentence begins in Afrikaans. In the dissonance that shifts from English to Afrikaans, the misspelling and mishmash of upper and lower characters evoke a sense of black people's mimicry of European languages. The last sentence says "Their most Gracious Majesties, Edward VII and Queen Alexandria […]." Mofokeng apparently attributed these words to Phakane's brother, who lived similarly with Phakane and aspired to follow British royal culture yet could not hide his genuine identity.

Indeed, Mofokeng's restoration of the image made Phakane appear present (Roth, 2009), and his presence grows even more compelling via the project's textual elements. By transferring the writer's mistakes, the text delivers a more vivid life of Phakane. Here, the contradicting effects—the carefully restored image versus the imperfectly ordered text—produce two oppositional modes of ambivalence that help viewers reconfigure Phakane. Here, Mofokeng's refusal to correct the mistakes in the text is comparable with the prudence he showed in restoring the image. In this way, both image and text indicate Mofokeng's strong attachment to transmitting Phakane's ambivalent position.

Figure. 5 & 6. Santu Mofokeng, *The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890—1950*, slide no. 50 & 62, 1997.
Black and white photograph, slide projection, varied size.
(Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

Mofokeng's disordered text is observed in other pieces of text. The text following Moatshe's portrait contains a direct quote from the daughter, "This is not my father! [...]" at the center. Then the sentence about her, "Information according to the daughter, who confessed that she had died and was resurrected after six days," is presented at the bottom at a greatly reduced size than other text (Fig. 5). Similarly, when the son of Seipati Martha Motingoe mention his mother's job, "a washerwoman," the text again appears at a reduced size (Fig. 6). In both cases, the small text sizes seem to deliver a speaker's whispers, meaning the varied sizes and styles of text create a mood akin to oral communication that provoke different volumes and inflections.

The formal imperfections also appear for two key questions of the project: "Who is gazing?" and "What was the occasion?" Different from other text written in white on a plain black ground, the two pieces of text emphasize misprinting effects and tonal differences in ground. Just above the first sentence "Who is gazing?" the second faintly appears (Fig. 7). Here, the latter looks like an erased yet imprinted phrase. The second sentence is presented again five slides later with a pronounced crease, which creates a visceral sense of flipping book pages to deliver a sense of touch (Fig. 8). Indeed, Mofokeng's inclusion of such formal imperfections in the text produces diverse sensorial effects: vernacular language, stimulation from imprinted memories, and awareness of voice and touch.
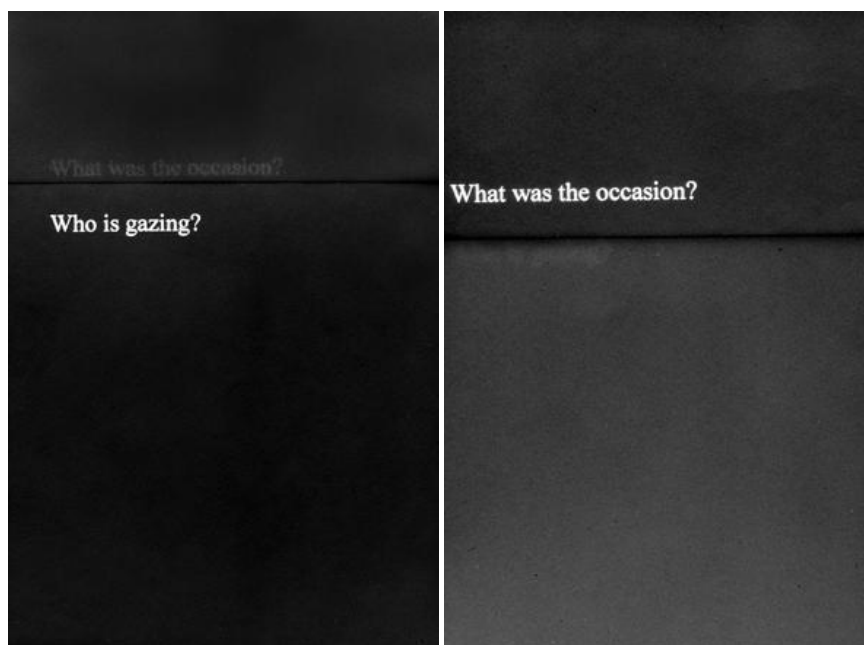

Figure. 7 & 8. Santu Mofokeng, *The Black Photo Album—Look at Me: 1890—1950*, slide no. 9 & 14, 1997.
Black and white photograph, slide projection, varied size.
(Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

Mofokeng once said, "Apartheid was a roof. And under this roof, life was difficult, and many aspects of life were concealed, proscribed (Mofokeng, 2011a, p.7)." True to his words, much of South African history was erased during the apartheid era, and his presented figures were never mentioned in his education. According to Eelco Runia, presence entails being in touch with people, things, events, and feelings that make us into what we are, so a sense of presence begins to create a base of historical research (Runia, 2006). As seen in Phakane's case, the image and text contribute to delivering a sense of presence that helps viewers get in touch with the dead man, Phakane and seek the history of his "erased" life. Likewise, the diverse sensory effects presented in the text of the project add vividness to a sense of presence in that the presented figures' erased lives are *felt* rather than examined or judged.

As an image-text archive, *The Black Photo Album* demonstrates the unceasing quest for the full body of history and memories around erased lives (Kleinberg, 2009). Based on archive theory (Foucault, 1972; Derrida, 1998), Achille Mbembe discussed the paradoxical relationship among death, archives, and the methods of remembering historical obligation. He wrote:

> The archive imposes a qualitative difference between co-ownership of dead time (the past) and living time. It is rooted in death [...] The very existence of the archive constitutes a constant threat to the state. [...]. The power of the state rests on its ability to consume time, that is, to abolish the archive and anaesthetize the past. [...] It is a radical act because consuming the past makes it possible to be free from all debt (Mbembe, 2002, p.23).

Mbembe criticizes how subversive forces are removed from contemporary archives. As seen in museums, the debris of death is quickly consumed amid the politics of forgetting rather than remembering (Mbembe, 2002). Here, Mofokeng's project is able to be called to a radical anti-archive in which viewers are continuously asked to recontextualize the photographed subjects and text in South African history (McDonough, 2008). In addition, the text opposes the finely mechanized forms that disturb immediate consumption of the presented figures. In this sense, *The Black Photo Album* resists being freed from historical debt, and the repayment method would be rescuing and archiving forgotten lives in the recording of history (Vladislavic, 2013).

4. Emotional Aspects of Recording Traumatic History

Soon after Nelson Mandela's inauguration as South Africa's first black president, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was set up in 1995 to collect evidence on the nature, causes, and extent of human rights violations committed during the apartheid era. Suffering from the colonial regime and its enduring politics including apartheid, collective memory was shredded into a multitude of pieces in South Africa (Christie, 2000). A major expectation of the TRC was to heal the victims' trauma to move forward a newly democratic nation and reconstruct its history (McEwan, 2003). The TRC defined four notions of truth in this way:

> First, factual or forensic truth based on legal and scientific notions of impartiality and objective procedures; second, personal or narrative truth based on subjective stories and multi-layered sets of experiences; third, social and dialogic truth constructed through debate and the collective discussion of facts; and fourth, healing and restorative truth that places facts in context and acknowledges individuals' experiences (TRC, 1998).

Among these definitions, the fourth asks to what degree the TRC did function to heal and restore the painful experiences of black people during apartheid. A widely common criticism of the TRC was its institutional mechanism of *reconciliation* between victims and perpetrators based on their confessions and forgiveness. According to Richard A. Wilson, such reconciliation distorted reality at the local level and obstructed multiple voices demanding retributive justice (Wilson, 2001). His argument emphasized the emotional aspects of compensating black South Africans' trauma. Mofokeng talked about the horrors he observed such as being "necklaced" (burning people with tires and gasoline), saying, "White people will get their comeuppance in the next life. [...] We will find justice. Maybe through the ancestors, maybe through Jesus (Hayes, 2009, p.39)." This type of statement regarding retributive justice has continuously appeared in South Africa (Hawley, 1997). The TRC's proposal for the reconciliatory process thus repressed black people's retributive impulse shaped by their painful experiences.

Coining the term *emotionology*, Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns wrote, "Emotionology is an attitude or standard that a society or a definable group within a society maintains toward basic emotion and appropriate expression [...] and that an institution encourages in human conduct (Stearns &. Stearns, 1985, p.813)." The reconciliation promoted by the TRC thus offered a critical opportunity to think about emotionology, which differentiates emotional norms from emotion (Plamper, 2010, p. 262). When such reconciliation is executed as a primary attitude or standard, a range of recurring trauma is ignored (Stearns &. Stearns, 1985). Though no modern society has legalized retributive justice, the TRC has come up short in its objective to compensate the victims' trauma. This criticism also indicates the TRC's failure to register the painful memories of black South Africans as history. As a result, the lingering issue of removing colonial vestiges and traumas is ever-present in the recording of history (Ndlovu, 2013).

After the TRC was established in 1995, a large number of South African artists worked to collect people's memories and transform them into recorded history. Certain theorists insisted that the artists had an ethical obligation to help the nation look back on its history before initiating social change (Mosely, 2007). Mofokeng, however, avoided direct socio-political intervention and opted to present a more complicated reality embedded in South African history via *The Black Photo Album*. By archiving black people who belonged neither to the white ruling class or the black subaltern class, his project explored how to view their contradictory lives under the colonial regime. Further, he enlarged the discursive field of postcolonial states into the *general*

experience by asking in one text, "Are these mere solemn relics of disrupted narratives or are these images expressive of the *general* human predicament?"

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza criticized the ways in which the international discursive fields of post-colonialism were institutionalized and limited, writing:

> The fragmentations, ambivalences, contingencies, hybridities, and multiplicities associated with the "posts" [such as postmodernism or post-colonialism], as conceptions and conditions, were articulated and experienced, with unsettling urgency and persistence, from the bloody dawn of colonial conquest and the violent negations (Zeleza, 2006, p.98).

Here, Zeleza used the word *ambivalence* to characterize the prefix "post-" in postcolonialism while reflecting on how a range of people experienced the persistence of colonial histories from former colonies. Criticizing African and Indian scholars who remained largely ambivalent with benefits from former colonizers' nations, Zeleza urged examining how colonial legacies reproduced neo-colonialist politics at the local level. The prefix "post-" in postcolonialism never means the "end" of colonial states.

When Mofokeng in 2013 was invited to exhibit *The Black Photo Album* at the German pavilion of the 55th Venice Biennale, he conveyed his complicated mindset about the presented black figures (Moore et al., 2013). He wrote in the catalog:

> Whenever we come under threat we remember who we are and where we come from, and we respond accordingly. [...] You are nothing without a past. [...] The word, "remember" needs elaboration. Re/member is a process by which we restore to the body forgotten memories (Mofokeng, 2013c, pp. 138-139).

Here, he expresses two contradictory feelings about his ontological self: a negation of the self that has no history and a desire for the self that belongs to history. He also alludes to the difficulty of restoring collective memories being lost in South Africa. In its efforts to become a democratic country, South Africa sanitized traumatic memories rather than rectifying and registering them as history (Ndlovu, 2013). Exhibiting *The Black Photo Album* at the foreign pavilion in Venice, Mofokeng asked visitors to recontextualize the persistent colonial state of South Africa in a wider range of territories.

5. Conclusion: Esthema

Mofokeng questioned the degree to which he could see the historical pains of others by exploring other nations with dark histories (Maharaj, 2011). He visited numerous countries including Japan, Vietnam, and Germany, and this prompted him to see the dark side of history. He said, "I was looking [...] how other countries were coping with memories of events filled with traumas similar to our own (Mofokeng, 2011b, p.148)." His projects *Landscapes of Trauma* (1997—2000) captured the historical remnants of the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. According to Mofokeng, "I don't think I exaggerate when I say the Holocaust and Apartheid are the two most memorable evils which hypnotised the world in the twentieth century (Mofokeng, 2011b, p.149)." These two events were also examined in *In the Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) by Hannah Arendt, who said prolonged colonialism combined with the contemporary forms of imperialism and racism, a postcolonial situation, is found elsewhere worldwide including Israel and Palestine (Lee, 2001). Mofokeng and Arendt shared the common idea that the world should see the two traumatic events as "ours."

Figure. 9. Santu Mofokeng, *Self-portrait, at KZ1—Auschwitz*, 1997-8
from the Project of *Landscapes of Trauma* (1997-2000).
Silver gelatin print. (Credit: The Walther Collection, Neu-Ulm, Germany)

Influenced by the Foucauldian concept of *episteme*, Johann Louw and Willem van Hoorn coined the term *esthema*, means the emotions of lived experiences. Central to the concept of episteme are epistemological fields that shape the base of knowledge in a particular time, yet the term *esthema* indicates the base of emotions that humans can feel in the particular time (Louw & Hoorn, 2014). In a sense, Mofokeng's *Self-portrait, at KZ1-Auschwitz* (1997—98) shows esthema, the base of feeling indigenous to the particular time, formed through his lived experiences with colonial and continued postcolonial states (Fig. 9). Mofokeng projected himself onto the historical site, and his face appears as a completely dark shadow. The shadow obstructs the central scene while standing like a massive historical monument in the camp, which seems for no one's place. Here, the shadow alludes to an obscure way to escape from the continuous colonial condition of being.

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