



Lens in the Landscape: Responses to Bonile Bam

Image: Bonile Bam, *Unnamed Road: The long gravel route to the Great Place, Mqhekezweni, Eastern Cape, South Africa, 2007.*



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



National
Research
Foundation



LENS IN THE LANDSCAPE

RESPONSES TO BONILE BAM

This online symposium is being held
in conjunction with the exhibition
Bonile Bam: Mandela's Roots
at the Gallery of the SARChI Chair in South African
Art and Visual Culture, 33 Twickenham Avenue,
Auckland Park, University of Johannesburg.

Monday, 18 September 2023

14:00 – 17:30 SAST

Acknowledgement

*This conference was made possible through
generous funding, support and facilities afforded the
SARChI Chair in South African Art and Visual Culture.*

*This Chair is funded by the Department
of Science and Innovation, managed by the
National Research Foundation and hosted by
the University of Johannesburg.*

PROGRAMME

14:00 – 14:10 SAST

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Brenda Schmahmann (*University of Johannesburg*)

14:10 – 15:10 SAST

CONVERSATION 1

Mandela's Roots: Interview with photographer, Bonile Bam

Sally Gaule (*University of the Witwatersrand*) talks to photographer **Bonile Bam** about the photographs constituting *Mandela's Roots* and their backstories.

In the course of his fascinating project, Bam visited Mvezo, Qunu, Mqhekezweni, Clarkebury (Ngcobo), Healdtown (Fort Beaufort/Nxukhwebe) and Alice (eDikeni) in the Eastern Cape. Seeing them as spaces offering rich histories and memories of Mandela's childhood and youth, the sites are often photographed in such a way that they simultaneously speak of a complex and difficult past shaped by the impact of colonialism. But while talking of the past, his photographs also comment on the present, invoking a sense of people's dreams of a better future which remain unrealised nearly 30 years into democracy.

15:10 – 15:15 SAST

Break

15:15 – 16:15 SAST

CONVERSATION 2

Creative responses: Layering landscapes

Kate'Lyn Chetty (*Stellenbosch Academy of Design and Photography; PhD candidate at the University of Johannesburg*)

Dahlia Maubane (*Woza Sisi Project*)

Discussant: **Landi Raubenheimer**
(*University of Johannesburg*)

In a creative conversation with Bam's work, two emerging artists discuss their own photographic practices.

Kate'Lyn Chetty introduces her body of work *A Place Away* in which family archival photographs of Sowati, KwaZulu-Natal, allow her lyrically yet critically to examine

issues of generational memory, nostalgia and Indian dislocation under apartheid. Dahlia Maubane presents *Woza Sisi*, a Photovoice project she began with street hairdressers working on Bree Street, Johannesburg, but has since expanded to work with women artists in urban landscapes, exploring tools with which they may document their own narratives.

16:15 – 16:20 SAST

Break

16:20 – 17:20 SAST

CONVERSATION 3

The ReMaking of an icon: Mandela in the visual canon

Grant Parker (*Stanford University*)

Paul Weinberg (*Photographic Legacy Project, University of Johannesburg*)

Discussant: **Staffan Löfving** (*Karlstad University, University of Johannesburg*)

Paul Weinberg discusses his long-term photographic series *Mandela's Firsts* in order to examine documentary photography's role in the creation of an 'origin story' for Mandela as well as documentary photography's potential to self-reflexively reveal how a national icon, such as Mandela, is layered in its construction.

Grant Parker provides a survey of statues depicting Nelson Mandela, showing how each version adapts his image for specific (often visible) purposes. Harder to identify but no less important are the social lives of the statues themselves, including their unveiling ceremonies and related photo-opportunities. ReMaking' is relevant in a different sense as well, namely the demonstrable dependency of statuary designs on canonical photographs. Taken together, Mandela photographs and statues constitute a pliable and dynamic visual canon.

17:20 – 17:30 SAST

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Brenda Schmahmann