Between Histories:
A South African Pop Culture Archive

By Sungano Kanjere

Abstract

The Between Histories Archive is a digital archive that collects, preserves, and shares South African pop culture artifacts. The project was born out of the need to acknowledge the study of popular culture from an African perspective, tracing South African cultural history through the sentimentality of public and popular culture. The archive mainly uses desktop research, the collection of online artifacts from existing, primary sources that are catalogued according to their position as "pop cultural": music videos, television programs, reading material, fashion, photography, etc. The archive is split into a public-facing Instagram page used to showcase artifacts and a longer form catalogue hosted on Google Drive as a referential directory. The Between Histories Archive aims to continue to collect available artifacts to provide a space for examining South African popular culture, develop the archive as an educational resource, and expand the study of cultural and fashion history in South Africa through the lens of pop culture.

INTRODUCTION

Between Histories is a digital archive dedicated to collecting and preserving South African pop culture. I started the archive as an attempt to understand how to document South African cultural history through the lens of pop culture, and as a means of sourcing and housing pop cultural artifacts on the internet. The Between Histories Archive operates solely online, through Instagram and a longer form Google Drive catalogue. Framing social media accounts as archival collections is a relatively new endeavor and invites community participation through the exploration of a different mode of digital archiving practice. The birth of the archive came out of the need to survey the digital landscape of pop culture from a South African point of view, and to create a reference-like resource for South African pop cultural studies.

The function of Between Histories is two-fold: to build a pop culture archive that is framed around the sentimentality related to archival objects and to explore South African popular culture from a community perspective.

South African cultural history is layered through the influences of colonialism and Apartheid, often clouding the consideration of cultural products that came to exist within a democratic South Africa. The study of history through the lens of pop culture lends itself to understanding the context of the production of fashion, media, or art objects as well as interrogating their existence within the public conscience. A retrospective look at South African media objects presents an opportunity to re-examine documents of cultural history through the process of memory while re-interpreting cultural events from an individual and collective point of view. The Between Histories Archive uses the sentimentality of pop and public culture as a means of understanding post-Apartheid reflections and developments of cultural products in the twenty-first century. This mandate is accomplished through the consideration of pop culture as a methodology to collect history and investigate different perspectives of history. In order to situate the Between Histories Archive within the field of South African fashion, the development of South African cultural studies will be considered alongside explorations of nostalgia and memory. In doing so, an essential set of critical methodologies for pop culture are examined and applied to the digital artifacts selected for the archive.

SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL STUDIES

The Between Histories Archive is a person-centered, contemporary exploration of pop culture within a Southern African context that interrogates South African history through the eyes of its citizens to address the understudied contexts of the contemporary experience. The archive is focused on the digital investigation and preservation of cultural products that have a limited, and in some cases fleeting, online presence. The study of pop culture invites a close examination of cultural products through their public reception. Definitions of popular culture have been somewhat elusive, with the work of Storey (2018), Dunlop (1975), Kidd (2014), Maudlin and Sandlin (2015), and Hall (1989) routinely considering the contradictory and transient nature of what is popular and what can be considered as a cultural product. In the exploration of South African popular culture, the working definition for pop culture is found at the intersections between social practices and ideas within public spaces in society (Hall, 1989: 60). The snap-shot of "identifiable" experiences and attitudes visualized largely through media (Hall, 2016: 233), and in this case fashion, create a tableau for pop culture in a post-Apartheid South Africa. Abah considers African popular culture studies as "[examining] the interests of the masses" (2009: 733): where inquiry is informed by how an object can appeal to a large public. Brystrom and Nuttall differentiate between popular and public culture, in the case of South Africa: where popular culture consists of widely appealing products of consumption and public culture operates within both private and public spaces, ultimately created by individuals (Brystrom & Nuttall, 2013). This distinction acknowledges the development of public space and culture in South Africa, with the legacy of Apartheid fragmenting the mass-creation of culture within publics. It further situates both popular and public objects present in South African culture within the Between Histories Archive where pop culture is understood as media objects that can be identified as both public and private for their relevance within the larger society media landscape and their relation to individuals based on their reception.

Pop and public culture are both a reflection and a product of their consumers through the participatory element of what is popular and what is public.

The acknowledgement of public and pop culture in a post-Apartheid South Africa invites knowledge, art, fashion, and media from previously silenced voices. In this way, cultural production is layered through the producer, product, location, movement, and personal backgrounds of its respective subjects and objects. Magnifying the popular contributes to our understanding of how artifacts can exist to an individual, and how the individual exists in the public. Pop culture has the ability to simultaneously relate to personal memories, inviting feelings of nostalgia and sentimentality, while still occupying enough space in the public to be universally reflective. Sentimentality, here, is understood as a retrospective affective quality ascribed when revisiting pop cultural objects and the time when they were popular. This is to interrogate the emotional aspect present in the process of collective memory making. Sentimentality also assists in the thematic nature of the archive, with themes/sentiments acting as categories for organising and analysing objects found in the archive.

Before 2000, South African cultural studies were relegated to the "moral economy" of resistance (Nuttall, 2006: 266). The focus of cultural production was framed through the lens of the subjugated: highlighting political challenges, the confines of identity within Apartheid, and the resulting solidarity between marginalized people. The 2000s brought the era of "emergent" cultural studies: where previous restrictions on self-determination were discarded in favor of transnational influences, self-declared identities, and the ambiguities of a present-day South Africa (Dolby, 2006; Hofmeyer, 2004; Nuttall, 2006). "Emergent" cultural studies considered public spaces as the site for cultural production: with audiences engaging with cultural objects within the public sphere on both a communal and individual level, rendering cultural objects popular by virtue of their mass visibility and relatability (Nuttall, 2006). "Emergent" considerations of culture had, and largely still have, a focus on the voice of the youth because of the appeal of mass media as a tool for communal reflecting, remembering, sharing, and producing (Barber, 1987). The presence of pop culture in cultural studies is undeniable: the ubiquity of the popular has an influence not only on public discourse but in the process of national memory. In the post-Apartheid era, pop culture demonstrates the interactions between politics, culture, media, identity, government, and public space through the reflective capacity of popular objects and the conditions in which they are created.

NOSTALGIA AND MEMORY

Nostalgia is used in tandem with memory as part of the curation process of Between Histories, as both are foundational to the sentimental goal of the archive. The presence of nostalgia in the process of remembering, specifically, allows for critical insights into the personal and collective impact of history. Nostalgia here is a theoretical application, to be able to derive meaning in artifacts beyond their historical value, to acknowledge the personal aspect of public objects. Worby and Ally investigate this orientation in the context of

FIGURE 1 *YIZO YIZO* SCREENCAP (1999). © COURTESY OF THE BOMB PRODUCTION.

South African history by attempting to "untangle" history from memory and from truth; as each process can operate separately while being intrinsically linked through public discourse (2013:458). This is evident in works by Barnett, who studied Yizo Yizo (see Figure 1 and 2), a teen drama series depicting a corrupt high school in a Johannesburg township to trace the commodification of pop culture and nation building (Barnett, 2004). Similarly, Dolby examined the African iteration of the reality competition show Big Brother (see Figure 3), where contestants live in an isolated mansion and vie for the public's interest to win a handsome cash prize, to reveal the role of television in the context of transnational identities, public space, and reconciliation (Dolby, 2006). These examples use television as both a public and private object: with its mode of mass dissemination being readily available for public discourse, as well as having a relationship to individual audience members through intentional, relatable representations of social life, relationships, class struggles, etc.

The use of memory, and often nostalgia, in the study of history, and here in the study of pop culture, offers a different perspective of cultural and/or historical events.

While the theoretical application of nostalgia has been criticized for its potential to misrepresent a past event or period in time (Worby & Ally, 2013); for the Between Histories Archive, nostalgia establishes a person-first approach to understanding how elements of public culture are informed, received, and understood.

FIGURE 2 *YIZO YIZO* CAST MEMBERS. (1999) © COURTESY OF THE BOMB PRODUCTION.

FIGURE 3 CAST OF *BIG BROTHER* AFRICA SEASON 1. (2003) © IMAGE SOURCED FROM AMEYAWAHWDERAH.COM.

SOUTH AFRICAN FASHION MEDIA AS POP CULTURE

Fashion, much like popular culture, encompasses the intersection of political, personal, and public. Fashion's position within South African public culture has been studied by Vincent through the fashioning of political figures and the possibilities of fashioning a political identity (Vincent, 2007; see Figure 4). Nuttall similarly considers the role of fashion within identity formation and the development of South African youth culture post-democracy (Nuttall, 2004). Farber (2017) examines the assertion of identity, particularly masculinity, through style, fashion, and dress (distinction in Tulloch, 2010) in contemporary South Africa through interrogating the interpolations of Black dandyism in fashion subcultures like the Smarteez (see Figure 5). Inggs (2017) similarly explores subcultures, using the *izikhothane* style of showmanship to trace intersections of class, dress, and society (see Figure 6). These examples reiterate the connections between politics, society, and the individual by positioning fashion as a private, public, and popular object. In this way, fashion has been regarded as a tool for the embodiment of resistance, identity, emergent/emerging culture, rebellion, and self-determination within contemporary South African history.

FIGURE 4 STONED CHERRIE AT SOUTH AFRICA FASHION WEEK. (2000) © PHOTOGRAPH BY NEO NTSOMA.

FIGURE 5 KEPI MNGOMEZULU OF THE SMARTEEZ. (2018) © PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS SAUNDERS.

FIGURE 6 PORTRAIT OF MEMBERS OF THE *IZISKOTHANE* SUBCULTURE. (2011) © PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRIS SAUNDERS.

FIGURE 7 "SIBU." (2007) © NONTSIKELELO VELEKO, PIGMENT PRINT ON COTTON PAPER.

FIGURE 8 "TEBOGO." (2006) © NONTSIKELELO VELEKO, PIGMENT PRINT ON COTTON PAPER.

Within Between Histories, fashion's position in public and pop culture in South Africa offers layers of perspectives to newly affirmed identities. For example, Nontsikelelo Veleko's portrait series *Beauty is in the eye of the beholder* (2003–2010) (see Figures 7 and 8) documents the distinct sartorial styles of South Africans; often showcasing Black aesthetic sensibilities that were limited in the Apartheid era. Photography captures the zeitgeist and Veleko's work compellingly demonstrates the shift in identity expression among the South African youth in Johannesburg. Mary Corrigall describes sartorial choices among young Black South Africans as a way to "try on" different identities, utilizing fashion as a visual marker for cultural change (Corrigall, 2014). Malibongwe Tyilo's popular fashion blog *Skattie what are you wearing?* holds a similar amount of favour among the South African youth of the early 2010s; with the blog documenting both popular social spaces and personal style musings (see Figures 9 and 10). Skattie, an Afrikaans term of endearment by which the blog is affectionately known, explores the lively social scene in metropolitan areas and divulges personal musings on art and fashion. In contrast with Veleko's work, *Skattie* positions a more assured South African youth identity alongside the increasingly global fashion influences that remain relevant to South Africa's social and cultural expressions. The blog's documentation of social spaces feels almost voyeuristic in its intimacy; but this intimacy conveys firsthand the contemporary fashion and style sensibilities during this period.

FIGURE 9 FROM "SKATTIE WHAT ARE YOU WEARING." (2012) ©
PHOTOGRAPH BY MALIBONGWE TYILO.

FIGURE 10 FROM "SKATTIE WHAT ARE YOU WEARING."
(2012) © PHOTOGRAPH BY MALIBONGWE TYILO.
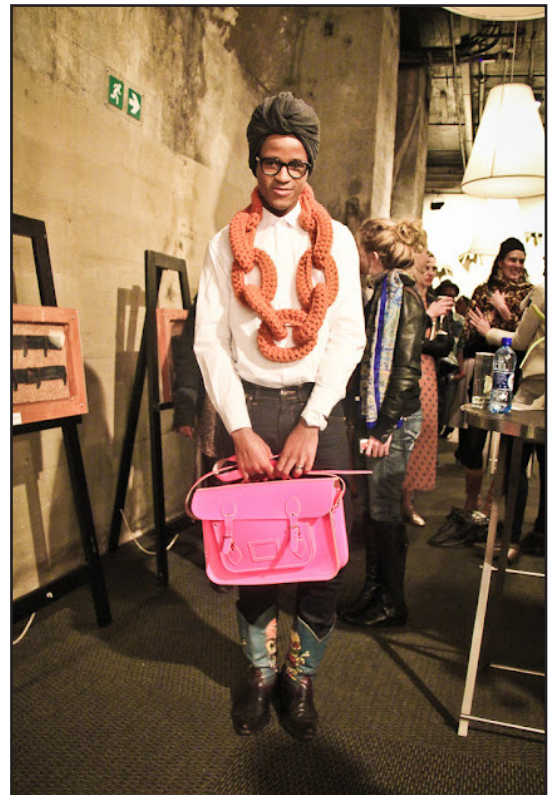
Photographs by Veleko, Tyilo, and Neo Ntsoma, for example, provide a glimpse of youth fashion within some of South Africa's major cities; documenting the intersections between personal style, location, social spaces, and time. The same can be said for the iterations of fashion within other disciplines, like television and music, where popular styles of dress like that of the *pantsulas* often make an appearance. *Pantsula* is a style of dance that incorporates intricate footwork and exaggerated facial expressions, the dancers themselves (usually performing in groups), and the resultant style related to the dance. Pantsula, as a style of dress, repurposes clothing traditionally linked to labourers: often making use of workwear, heavy duty denim and cargo pants. Converse sneakers, button down dress shirts and cotton canvas bucket hats are defining elements of the style. Characters on *Yizo Yizo* and members of the 90s *kwaito* (a style of house music that emerged from Soweto) trio *TKZee* dressed in Dickies trousers, Converse All Stars, and *ispoti* (bucket hats), resulting in a recognizable and relatable reference to life in the townships (see Figure 11).

FIGURE 11 TKZEE FROM "DLALA MAPANTSULA" MUSIC VIDEO. (1998) © BMG AFRICA.

POP CULTURE AS METHODOLOGY

Pop culture as methodology is an accessible mode of examining people, culture, and the conditions of cultural production.

In the Between Histories Archive pop culture is an object of study as well as a method of analysis to understand how the selected digital artifacts exist as part of South African pop culture and cultural history more broadly.

Pop culture, here, can be loosely related to Hall's (2016) tentative definition of popular culture as a process, or "state of play in cultural relations" (2016: 235), that is the dialectic of public and private. This definition is to understand the ways in which objects can become popular, through a transformational inter-play between "containment and resistance" (Hall, 2016: 228). This creates the foundation for pop culture as a methodology: in order to trace the origins and conditions for what is considered as pop culture from a retrospective point of view. The pop culture method contextualizes public cultural production through deriving meaning from a public perspective, where members of the public act as receivers of cultural objects. The individual attitudes or sentiments towards cultural products foregrounds their shared resonance within a public space, by ascribing meaning from an artifact/product's historical relevance as well as any emotional qualities linked to personal memories or associations with these items. This method importantly demands a reassessment of historical moments that have already been documented and memorialized, but have yet to be studied for how their images interact with society, politics, location, media, identity, government, and public space, and, thus, have influenced their categorization as pop culture.

OBJECTS OF ANALYSIS COLLECTION

The selection framework for artifacts in the Between Histories Archive first and foremost privileges the audience reception of the South African media objects such as television programs, music, art, fashion, and photography. In most cases, digital objects are selected according to their readily identifiable and popular presence within their respective media industry. From here, each artifact is placed within a ten-year year group, starting from the year after the official end

of Apartheid, 1995–2005, 2006–2016, and 2017–2027, in order to pinpoint any relevant cultural happenings during that ten-year period. Artifacts are further analyzed through examining existing South African cultural and media studies literature, to connect the object to a theme present within each ten-year cohort. The themes of pride, joy, hope, self, and rebellion are loosely related to an emotion or sentiment, to trace a collectively held idea or interpretation of the object. These media objects foster intimate, personal reflections from their viewers and, together, these private memories resonate with larger, collective accounts of the object. This is to analyze the duality of pop culture as both public and private, with public presence assisting in understanding how an object has been engaged with, and private/personal memories further exploring an individual experience of the object and how that can be reflected in the larger public perception.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The Between Histories Archive makes use of desktop research to anthologize notable moments within South African pop culture. This consists of collecting artifacts from existing, primary sources such as photographs, blog posts, and music videos and categorizing them. The chosen artifacts are then analyzed according to their presence within South African cultural conscience, through narrative analysis of the objects as they interact with political events, location, identity politics, etc. Narrative analysis identifies the social conditions present for the production of the cultural object, with the narrative being constructed according to how an object fits into the chosen definition of South African pop culture (De Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2015). Artifacts are considered according to their position within the public conscience: through my own memory of "iconic" events as well as considering lesser documented cultural events. The use of personal memories act as a starting point for the investigation of cultural or historical significance of that artifact. Where my own memories overlap with artifacts included in the archive, the research method prioritizes the memories of others as the focal point for analysis.

Acknowledging that sentimentality is the cornerstone of this archive, personal memories or feelings related to people, music, television, fashion, and photography are positioned as instrumental to the creation and curation of the archive.

Collecting and showcasing these items, and how they relate to individual and national identity, memory, and public discourse assist in expanding what is knowledge or culture within contemporary South Africa.

       The use of Instagram to showcase these artifacts is a way to create an accessible front-page for the archive. Instagram is a common vehicle for digital archiving projects such as the African Style Archive (@africanstylearchive), the Y2k Aesthetic Institute (@y2kaesthetic), Dress Memory Archive (@dressmemoryarchive), Archive of Malian Photography (@malianarchive), Black Archives (@blackarchives.co), and countless others. All these archives/digital humanities projects use Instagram as the primary mode for curating and displaying the collected objects, operating almost exclusively through a social media interface. For Between Histories (@betweenhistoriesarchive), this platform is not only the easiest option for showcasing the archive but also a means of trying to create a community by exhausting Instagram's interactive capabilities. Social media applications, like Instagram, allow for an increased proximity to audience members or viewers of the archive; promoting a participatory element through inviting submissions, opening the comments section for discussion and communicating directly with community members through direct messages. The use of social media for creating and disseminating archival material has been studied according to the use of Instagram as an extension of marketing activities performed within a physical museum or heritage institutions (Jensen, 2014; Stuedahl and Smordal, 2014). Few studies have considered the capacity for social media to operate as an archive where digital objects primarily are used to create, share, and store content. Vlassenroot and her colleagues (2021) consider the possibilities for social media archiving as preserving "digital born" content through social media applications. This study explores the value of content created and preserved online, to legitimize purely digital objects as archivable material. The Between Histories Archive interpolates these theories by creating a digital repository or directory for objects that have little to no internet presence. The absence of a physical archive develops an online resource querying the relationship between post-Apartheid South African fashion media and surrounding politics, culture, identity, government and public space. In tandem with Instagram, Between Histories digitally catalogues artifacts on Google Drive (see Figure 12), thus accomplishing the archive's referential goals. The Google Drive features an introduction explaining how the archive works, a content page listing the artifacts in the archive, a bibliography for reading material related to South African history and pop culture studies and a final page of additional resources related to African fashion and popular culture (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 12 SCREENSHOT OF THE BETWEEN HISTORIES CATALOG. (2022).

FIGURE 13 SCREENSHOT OF THE BETWEEN HISTORIES CATALOG. (2022).

CONCLUSION

The Between Histories Archive has gained a small following of fashion enthusiasts, researchers, and casual viewers engaging in the collective exercise of public memory both locally and internationally.

The goal of the archive was always to create a sense of community by providing a space for South African pop culture. Using a digital space not only anthologizes artifacts, but also provides South African pop culture with a larger digital presence.

The process of remembering is evident: followers of the archive often comment on how their memories connect to a song, piece of clothing, and/or TV show. For example, Scott Williams reminisced about their contributions to the *Skattie what are you wearing?* online magazine in the comments of the corresponding Instagram post about Malibongwe Tyilo's blog, and designer and fashion activist Karishma Kelsey relayed memories of watching *Yizo Yizo* and some of the *kwaito* music featured in the show. By sharing specific cultural memories alongside personal memories, a snapshot of life in South Africa slowly comes into focus through the eyes of its citizens.

Analyzing cultural production in contemporary South Africa through the lens of pop culture positions the personal lived experience as an integral part of the understanding of how culture is produced. The process of remembering, used in conjunction with tracing documented cultural history to media within a post-Apartheid South Africa centres the sentimental attachment that public objects hold within individual and collective memory while maintaining their historical value. The Between Histories Archive, as a resource and digital archive, bridges the gap between formal studies of fashion and culture, through the necessary attention to public life, public culture, and person-first approaches to sharing knowledge and information in the internet era.

Interview
Origins of Between Histories

LINDEN HILL

Let's begin by discussing the origins of Between Histories. This project emerged when you were in school at STADIO School of Fashion in Johannesburg, South Africa from 2020–2021. Walk me through the process from having the initial idea to creating the digital archive.

SUNGANO KANJERE

I did my Honours over two years, when it is usually completed within a year. This was suggested to me because I did my undergrad in psychology and communication studies, so it was supposed to help me get a feel for studying fashion academically. I did the theory courses in the first year, along with some additional courses like fashion theory and trends and did my research project in my second year. My research project consisted of my mini-dissertation and then my internship that I did with AFRI (African Fashion Research Institute), which had to coincide with my dissertation. I had an interest in archiving and the capacities for digital media as they relate to the individual (which is very loosely what my dissertation was about), so together with Erica de Greef we came up with an idea of how to use digital/social media as a type of archive. In doing my research leading up to looking for places to complete my internship, I came across Erica's doctoral thesis,[1] which investigated histories, dispositions, and museum practices of dress/fashion collections at the Iziko Museums in Cape Town and was interested in how the process of archiving could be made a little bit more informal. I'd also seen some independent projects that felt more like personal pursuits or like passion projects, which made it feel like a "South African" digital archive was possible and could also fulfil the requirements for my degree.

LINDEN HILL

How did this project relate to (or perhaps depart from) concurrent work you pursued toward earning your Honours degree at STADIO?

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[1] Erica de Greef, *Sartorial Disruption* (thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Cape Town, January 2019).

SUNGANO KANJERE

For context, my mini-dissertation was limited to six months and my internship was three months. Initially the internship and resultant Between Histories project was supposed to last the three months just to exist as a product of my time with AFRI. My dissertation was more concerned with individuals and how identities are constructed through social media and subsequently how social media can act as a type of archive for constructing identity. It kind of grew legs (so to speak) in the form of a person-centred archive for South African pop culture, that could also have the potential of being an educational type of resource for studying South African history through the visual and sartorial cultures of the people that live in South Africa/through pop culture. My personal research interests have always been centred around studying culture and social media, and I initially had an idea of trying to study influencer culture but it felt a little bit too expansive to try and fully study within the limitations of my program. Using pop culture and Instagram to try and channel my interest in archives along with social media was like the perfect middle ground.

LINDEN HILL

I love this idea of a "person-centred archive." Before we delve more into that, could you speak more about the significance of the project title "Between Histories?"

SUNGANO KANJERE

I personally feel like pop culture is not really considered to be an academic avenue for studying history, but to me it has always been a very easy way to pinpoint a specific moment in time. So "between" was intended to characterize the idea of pop culture slipping through the cracks of formal studies of history and culture. This [approach] is also to characterize the perspective of the audience at the centre of inquiry as an overlooked element of cultural studies, and to include these different perspectives/narratives of South African cultural and fashion history. "Histories" is intended to recognize the plurality of perspectives as a foundation for the archive, and to history/cultural studies itself. This is through acknowledging the contribution of these perspectives to history by using sentiments as a tool to build the perspectives/"histories." Multiple perspectives allow for different versions of an event, or item, to exist at the same time as be equally valued and centred in the analysis of an artifact. Pop culture functions as an in-between for considerations of low and high-brow culture and in this sense as in between what is and isn't considered to be part of history.

LINDEN HILL

Absolutely. It can be challenging (especially in academia and in the discipline of art history, where I work) when limiting categories exist that attempt to rigidly separate "the high" and "the low." I am hopeful, though, that we are entering a moment when we can move beyond these arbitrary and exclusionary boundaries.

Methods of Between Histories

LINDEN HILL

Your use of pop culture as a methodology offers a space for sentimentality and nostalgia, which are often considered beyond the bounds of traditional archives. Subsequently, this methodology permits a shift of focus from the maker of a given pop cultural artifact to the audience receiving or viewing that media, which connects to the desire of creating a "person-centred archive" that you mentioned earlier. What do you understand to be some of the benefits of that shift in focus?

SUNGANO KANJERE

Insight! I think using the audience as the point of entry in viewing artifacts offers a deeper understanding into why something is considered popular in the first place. As a South African born to Zimbabwean parents a lot of the contexts of popular TV shows, movies, music, etc. was a little bit lost on me growing up because I didn't have the same understanding of the country's history, or even just a connection to South African culture in the same way. So it's a little bit of a personal exercise for me as well as a way to try and layer different perspectives and experiences of popular "objects" to understand why certain things are popular and widely received. I also think the focus on the audience changes the position of artifacts from being a static representation of a time/a community to an active part of public life because of how it relates not only to an individual but to a collective audience.

LINDEN HILL

Yes. What seems to be important to the Between Histories archive is that these artifacts aren't frozen in time, so to speak. Rather, they continue to be (re)activated by the communities and individuals that engage with them at various moments in time. I am sure it is (and will continue to be) fascinating to see how certain artifacts' poignancy and significance shifts in relation to broader socio-political and cultural contexts.

This makes me think, too, of Ann Cvetkovich's concept of an "archive of feelings," defined as "an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves but in the practices that surround their production and reception."[2] The focus of such an archive isn't solely on the artifacts, but rather extends to encompass how an individual or community experienced (and perhaps continues to experience) that artifact. Though Cvetkovich focuses on trauma, I think there's certainly a way in which we could understand Between Histories as a certain type of "archive of feelings." Have you encountered any challenges that emerged from centering memory and the first person in the creation of your archive? Has centering memory and the first person shifted how you understand your role as a researcher/archivist/artist?

SUNGANO KANJERE

The most challenging thing about centering memory in the archive is trying to represent as much of an individual memory as possible, while also trying to group individual memories according to their similarities and differences. In as much as memory acts as a foundation for the curation of artifacts, it definitely has been challenging to be able to discern between memory as a component of history and memory as a personal, subjective process. It's important to be able to use my own judgement when researching artifacts for their inclusion in the archive, but as an academic pursuit it can become blurry when I'm trying to present the research as memory while maintaining some type of credibility within South African history, cultural history, and fashion history. I think I often struggle with finding a balance between representing a moment in time as it relates to South African history while including enough of a sentiment that an artifact can still be relatable or memorable enough to my audience (as well as maintaining a sense of academic integrity). I want to be able to capture an artifact as part of the public conscience and as part of an individual memory. I think in this instance, feelings help position the artifact within the archive as "historical" and help to understand the South African cultural landscape retrospectively. I think archives can also feel a little bit static at times and very un-feeling in a way that limits the material to being purely educational/historical and centering feelings in the Between Histories archive broadens the capacity for how knowledge is made and shared. I think using memory has definitely shifted my role as a researcher because I almost feel like I'm not working. I feel like it alleviates some of the pressure I might have felt if this project was made to be purely academic or educational. It allows me to explore the process of digital archiving a little bit more freely as well.

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[2] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

LINDEN HILL

That completely makes sense. I think the "alleviation of pressure" goes both ways to also include those who are engaging with the material. While many archives are premised on being exclusionary, there's a certain level of accessibility that you're able to achieve with Between Histories.

Between Histories contains artifacts from a variety of media including photographs, music videos, and a television series. Have you experienced challenges cataloguing these disparate media under the auspices of a single archive? Would you say that the archive's digital interface in some ways makes media-specificity irrelevant (or at least, of lesser importance than it might be in a traditional archive)?

SUNGANO KANJERE

Not really; I think using a multimedia approach has helped to give the archive a feeling of being well rounded. In the planning stages of creating the archive, I had difficulty constituting what exactly can be deemed part of "pop culture" and using a multimedia approach helped to try and broaden the scope of what can be included in the catalogue, as well as provided me with a little bit more wiggle room in terms of trying to think of what each artifact has the capability to represent. I think the only real challenges I had trying to catalogue everything was in the creation of different themes, and thinking about how to restrict some of the content into one theme for clarity and also for ease of navigating the archive. I do think in some ways the media specificity becomes irrelevant because the way I created the archive was supposed to act as a bit of a time capsule and use every exhaustible resource to try and create a whole picture of South African public culture. I think the use of Google Drive to house the catalogue also serves to mimic a traditional archiving system, as none of the categories lead you to a different physical location as it potentially could in a physical archive; everything is on Google Drive, it's all in one place, and all of the categories are more for reference purposes than anything.

LINDEN HILL

The Between Histories Catalogue (on Google Drive) groups items according to a number of themes including disruption, hope, joy, pride, self, and rebellion. How did you come up with these categories? Do you have working definitions for each of them? Perhaps you could select one of your themes and briefly elaborate on its definition and why you chose it?

SUNGANO KANJERE

The themes were made to try and represent a commonly held sentiment among South Africans during three distinct ten-year periods. Initially the artifacts were grouped according to year group only, but it was suggested to me that themes might be useful to further categorise artifacts. Some of the themes were thought of before the artifacts were found and some emerged after examining the artifacts and accompanying sentiments surrounding them. The archive contains a "Theory" folder for academic articles that relate to South African cultural and fashion history and some of the themes were built through identifying sentiments present in that reading material. A theme like "self," for example, came to represent a combination of sentiments of self-affirmation and self-determination, and acts as a universal theme in each ten-year cohort to store artifacts that are more inclined towards representing the public sphere/public sentiments, rather than a specific pop cultural moment/person/event. I think this theme is most related to fashion because the artifacts within it try to encompass an understanding of how South Africans are identifying themselves within the transitional period of South Africa's political landscape. The other themes follow a similar type of thinking, where I'm trying to look at what's happening contextually in and around South Africa and using the artifacts to come up with a sentiment that feels universal.

LINDEN HILL

Self-affirmation and self-determination undoubtedly relate to fashion, particularly when also layered with questions of identity within a changing political and cultural climate. I'd be interested to hear you elaborate a little more on the idea of "self" in the transitional period of South Africa's political landscape and how that might connect to specific fashion-related artifacts in the archive.

SUNGANO KANJERE

For the most part I think the idea of self-determination/affirmation/etc. is most related to the early-2000 period where in some of the imagery, you can see a lot more of a tendency towards bold colour and audacious styles. From a view of fashion media at that time, style sensibilities were growingly experimental because of the newly found personal freedom of expression. With a lot of focus being shifted to the youth of the country, Neo Ntsoma's *Generations of Change* photography series also did a great job of capturing the turn towards fashion (and in this case music) as an expressive object. Her portrait series combines music and fashion and explores how "youth spaces" like the club scene at the time was a space for exploring fashion sensibilities, and seeing people come into their own that way, as well as how music and the beginnings of kwaito (a South African style of house music) were starting to act almost as a voice for South African youth at the time. I wish I had access to the original photographs but seeing glimpses of them

in *Artscape*, the documentary covering Ntsoma's career featured in the Between Histories catalogue, was so cool when I came across it. "Self" is a category that I tried to include across the different year groups because of how flexible it is as a theme, as well as having a real connection to fashion and identity especially with the backdrop of transition and political change, cultural change; things like that. I think another example could be the use of Steve Biko on T-shirts by local brand Stoned Cherrie (which isn't in the catalogue yet from a fashion point of view, but Louise Vincent [2007] considers the body/fashion as a space for politics and the transitional period in South Africa in *Steve Biko* and *Stoned Cherrie: Refashioning the body politic in Democratic South Africa*), which kind of visually explores the idea of political freedom/resistance and how this can be embodied through fashion; and more importantly through something as casual as a t-shirt.

LINDEN HILL

The archive items are grouped in ten-year increments: 1995–2005, 2006–2016, and 2017–2027. Is there a significance to these particular date ranges? Why did you select 1995 as the starting point? Could you explain a little if/how these date ranges align with events in South African history?

SUNGANO KANJERE

The ten-year cohorts were used to try and make the sourcing and cataloguing of content a little bit more manageable. The year groups were also created to try and demarcate specific periods within South African history that would assist in the creation of themes. 1995–2005 is the time period right after Apartheid, where a lot of media initiatives were more politically engaged in the effort to create a new national identity. The themes in this cohort relate to a feeling of newfound "freedom" while also considering how this freedom operates in relation to the past. 2006–2016 is still a kind of transitional period but looking at different moments in cultural history that had a hand in the development of pop culture, for example the 2010 World Cup and how this affected nation building, local politics, and the kind of global embrace of South African pop culture. This period is more focused on pinning down a sense of identity among South Africans and how that identity was visually communicated. 2017–2027 looks to the future and considers prospective iterations of youth culture through the development of more recent artifacts and "icons." This final time period is looking to define South African pop culture with a more tangible, firm sense of what pop culture means in South Africa, without having to rely too much on how it may relate to the past.

LINDEN HILL

One especially fantastic attribute of the Between Histories catalogue is that each entry has a link that allows the viewer to watch the video, read the blog, etc. and then potentially go on her own internet journey of discovery to learn more. Have you run into the challenge of thinking of an artifact that you would like to include in Between Histories, but it doesn't have an internet presence? Put another way, are there certain types of artifacts that might elude the archive?

SUNGANO KANJERE

Yes, that's one of the biggest challenges I've come across in the creation of the archive. Part of my research process for the planning of the archive was asking some of my friends what moments/shows/musicians they think of when I mention a specific year, or I would ask what comes to mind when I say "South African pop culture"; and almost everyone I asked said *Jam Alley. Jam Alley* was a music show in the early 2000s that discussed local popular songs, artists, and music videos and often had live performances and members of the audience to dance and sing and enjoy the atmosphere (almost like *TRL!*). There are little to no clips of the show that I can use in the archive, but *Jam Alley* was a huge part of the revamping of South African broadcasting in the late 90s that had a very pertinent place in youth culture at the time. There was also an influx of a lot of South African iterations of British game shows around the same time like *50/50* and *Friends Like These* (which I ultimately didn't include because of the fact that they aren't necessarily a strictly South African cultural product, even if they did have an impact on public life). I also would have loved to include segments from local magazines but haven't been able to find anything usable or openly accessible (yet) but [that] would've been a great way to look retrospectively at trends and local brands. Another artifact that I would like to include in the archive is *Y-Magazine*, which was a youth directed magazine started in 1998. The audience for *Y-Mag* was similar to that of *YFM*, a youth radio station. Both were products of a newly found interest in the creation and development of Black urban youth culture in the late 90s/early 2000s, as a response to the "born free" attitude present after the 1994 elections ("Born free" is a refrain used to refer to the youth of South Africa that were born after 1994, into a "free" South Africa). *Y-Mag* was created and distributed by young people with a heavy focus on the foundations of pop culture like fashion, music, television and entertainment. The magazine itself had some really fun imagery and focused a lot on developing media from within youth spaces, rather than a more speculative or outsider perspective. There are some of the early issues available for viewing on Chimurenga Library, which is an online archival project that profiles independent pan-African paper periodicals, but I would love to have some included in the Between Histories archive as well, to try and contextualise some of the fashion media oriented towards South African

cultural production in that time period. Magazines in general have been hard to come by, because a lot of them are stored in physical archives and I just don't have the necessary access to them in a way that can be reproduced or at the very least shared digitally.

LINDEN HILL

Jam Alley sounds fascinating! Let's keep our fingers crossed that one day clips surface online –– they must exist somewhere! This is also making me wonder about how different age groups experience and define "South African pop culture" at a given moment.

Fashion & Between Histories

LINDEN HILL

It is undeniable that fashion plays a major role in many of the artifacts in Between Histories; as we well know, fashion and popular culture often go hand in hand. I would love it if you could select one example of an artifact in the Between Histories archive and offer a reading/explanation of the significance of fashion in that artifact.

SUNGANO KANJERE

I absolutely love watching old music videos and I think TKZee had a really clear and defined iteration of the *pantsula* style in a number of their music videos. *Pantsula* is a style of dance that is often related to the types of clothes that are worn to comfortably be able to dance (traditionally anyway): Dickies trousers, Converse All Stars, and usually a plain T-shirt. It's instantly recognizable and seen in so many iterations of life in the townships in South Africa. *Pantsula* as a dance style and as a style of dress is rich with reflections on social life, political positioning, and national identity as well as being a type of uniform for many people that live in South Africa. I think the same type of uniform can be seen in some music videos of Abashante, who kind of follow the traditional girl-group treatment of the late 90s of having coordinated styling and a sense of uniformity through that. Abashante also have a very global look to them where a lot of their costumes have that metallic, reflective look that you can see in TLC and Blaque music videos, so I think that's an interesting example of how global and local fashion sensibilities can be seen through a retrospective look at pop culture in South Africa specifically. There's almost a sense of escapism to their music being an up-and-coming genre that was produced out of a struggle-period that's very specific to South Africa and their look/feel embodying something that's

accessible but also not necessarily South African. I think this is something I'd love to explore more though some of the fashion subcultures that have emerged in South Africa (i.e. Smarteez, Skothane) and am working to finish the research so I can include them in the archive soon –– to add more of a focus on some very identifiably fashion related artifacts!

LINDEN HILL

Yes, the music video is *such* an important pop cultural medium that hasn't been given nearly enough attention. They offer the possibility of numerous avenues of inquiry, including (as you point to) the interconnectedness of dance, fashion, and popular culture.

Could you say more about the global and local fashion sensibilities that are evident in music videos? For instance, how did this "global look" arise? Were American music videos (by TLC, for example) played on South African television, on shows like *Jam Alley?* What about fashion and pop culture magazines?

SUNGANO KANJERE

I think a mixture of TV and music can be attributed to global fashion sensibilities being adopted by South African artists. TKZee referenced "American gangster movies" in some of the documentaries they were featured in, which kind of speaks to the *pantsula* style because of the frequent association between township culture and gangsterism. The idea of a music group looking similar or having a specific style that can almost act as a uniform isn't something that's necessarily new, but I do think it's interesting to try and contrast what's happening globally and locally to see how influences take shape. For the most part though, in the mid- to late-2000s you can see a shift to embracing more of a South African fashion identity through people and artists, local brands and focusing more on fashion trends that were happening in South Africa. I can see that most in hip-hop music videos around the 2010s, where local streetwear brands like Ama Kip Kip can be seen quite frequently. I don't think international music was played on *Jam Alley* (but I could be wrong!), but some other music channels would play like a Top 10 or whatever was popular during the day so there definitely was an exposure to

international style/fashion sensibilities through the media. A lot of the magazines in the early 2000s were focused on developing a South African identity within the new, democratic South Africa, so you can see where some styles or trends might have emerged through magazines like *Drum* and *True Love*; but there was (to me anyway) less of an international influence because there were a lot of emerging local fashion brands like Stoned Cherrie and Loxion Kulcha, and that was more accessible. So for the most part in South African magazines you can see a blend between global and local influences, and can be contrasted to South African versions of *Seventeen, Elle, Cosmopolitan* etc., which were more obviously globally inclined.

LINDEN HILL

How do you situate Between Histories within contemporary fashion studies in South Africa? In what ways does it fit into an existing dialogue and in what ways does it depart from other work being done?

SUNGANO KANJERE

I think Between Histories offers a retrospective look at fashion history and the developments of contemporary fashion in South Africa. I've always been kind of taken by pop culture from a more Western point of view and think that the archive can act as a way to identify both global and local fashion influences in the past and how they've come to reveal themselves in the present. Especially with the kind of heightened interest in African fashion designers, I think the archive can help give more of a voice to South Africa's unique fashion history from a more focused point of view.

LINDEN HILL

Absolutely. Are there other South African fashion scholars, designers, curators, or individuals working in the industry with whom this project feels particularly aligned? In other words, how are others in the fashion industry (broadly con-strued) working with pop culture as a primary material in ways that are similar to or different from how you work with pop culture?

SUNGANO KANJERE

During the research phase of the project I found a lot of inspiration in Nontsike-lelo Veleko's work and how she was using photography to document not only her own life and career, but also how she extended that lens to people in South Africa. She doesn't live in South Africa anymore, but the work that she did do that I have access to, was incredibly informative for me in terms of grounding the archive in public space and public culture. I think a lot of the promotional work that Thebe Magugu does on Instagram also relates to the idea of memory

and fashion, as a lot of his collections feature his own personal memories/sentiments. His latest collection, "Genealogy," interpolated clothing featured in old family photographs; recounting memories together with his mother and aunt in an accompanying documentary. Vtsek Studios also do a great job of subverting Western pop culture icons and placing them in settings that feel incredibly familiar to someone that lives in South Africa. Their work is usually very punchy and, to me, familiarizes South African pop culture in a landscape (i.e. digital space) that sometimes feels like it isn't as accessible or memorable.

Future of Between Histories

LINDEN HILL

How do you see the community of Between Histories expanding? You write about the "community of remembering" — what could that mean in practice? Are there ways you are considering using the Instagram platform not only as an image repository, but also as space for conversation?

SUNGANO KANJERE

I would really love to have access to more material and really round out the archive a bit more. I think because I'm approaching this project independently, the access that I have to certain materials is limited in comparison to if I was working through a school or cultural organization. I try to encourage submissions from followers of the archive as a way to overcome this, in order to get more stuff to include but also to try and allow members of the Between Histories community to be able to share their own memories in a semi-formal capacity. I like the idea of something in the archive triggering an emotional response in someone viewing the material that could possibly lead to an almost community-built archive, instead of me being like an arbiter for what is or isn't a part of the South African pop-cultural psyche. I've considered using the Instagram live feature for a type of conversational element to the archive, either by myself or with someone whose work I've catalogued, which could expand the content and use of the archive.

LINDEN HILL

Let's jump forward five years. Where will Between Histories be? Once you have collected and catalogued a certain amount of artifacts, do you envision creating new projects based on those artifacts? What might those projects be and where might they be located (i.e. would you envision some type of exhibition, panel discussion, zine, etc.)?

SUNGANO KANJERE

I would love to make a zine! I like the fact that the archive exists online and there's a sense of continuity to the existence of the project purely because the account is open and accessible and intended to be available at any time. But I did want to make a zine in the beginning of developing the archive, but was limited for time and hadn't found enough artifacts that could have been included. I also think having a more robust system for cataloguing and sorting archival material would be a dream, because as much as Google Drive has been useful to me, scrolling sideways is really annoying. I do also think that the digital nature of the archive is helpful in terms of trying to preserve cultural artifacts and have them all in one place, but I can't help but think of the accessibility of the archive. Digital access and internet access is still quite elusive across the whole of South Africa and I hope that in five years something will have changed in regard to creating lasting public access to the internet; but that's also a mammoth task to try and think about. In the same vein, I think I'd also like to imagine that there is more investment in developing digital infrastructure to be able to not only access online materials but to preserve them independently. I would love to not have to think about whether a source is available on the internet. I constantly think of the constant refrain that things on the internet "exist forever," and so my vision for the archive has always been an eternal resource that will always be available even if I'm not updating it often, kind of like a library. I would love to have developed something that feels like a "real," semi-formal, useful display of South African pop culture on the internet.

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