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Monumental Interplays: How Virtual Encounters Affect Understandings of the

Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park in South Africa

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Abstract

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At the end of legal apartheid in 1994, the Government of National Unity established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission to begin the process of reconciliation for the egregious human rights violations and abuses suffered during apartheid. One specific form of symbolic reparations proposed by the Commission was to build "memorials and monuments [that] will commemorate the victories and the conflicts of the past, … to make sure that the abuses people have suffered do not happen again." At his Freedom Day speech at Umtata in 1999, Dr. Mandela promised the construction of a Freedom Park that would honor those who lost their lives in the pursuit of South African liberation. The project was launched on June 1, 2000 and was partially opened in March 2004.

Freedom Park is physically positioned 2.4 kilometers away from the Voortrekker Monument, a site inaugurated on December 16, 1949 to celebrate a white minority South African national identity. The ideological dialogues between the two sites and their changing meanings throughout time and history have been widely discussed in art historical scholarship on South African monuments. This thesis aims to examine the ways that Freedom Park responds to the Voortrekker Monument through its conceptualization and historical narratives. It utilizes online sources such as Google Earth, official online tours, and primary sources by the architects of the monuments to examine the monuments visually and conceptually. Ultimately, Freedom Park fails to holistically counter the Voortrekker Monument because it exhibits internal contradictions in its attitude toward the Voortrekker Monument and fails to account for the Voortrekker Monument's new life as a politically sterile tourism site. The discussion on these two monuments has implications for monuments in other places and times, such as the current debate on Confederate monuments, the 2021 President's Task Force on Untold Stories and Disenfranchised Populations at Emory, and Stone Mountain in Atlanta, Georgia.

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Introduction

Monuments are a capacious category, comprising a multitude of "things" both material and immaterial. They are human landmark symbols that convey ideals, aims, and actions; they express cultural needs and the feelings and thinking of the people.[1] They can be intentional monuments, as in the Statue of Liberty, or they can be unintentional, as in artifacts of periods past whose worth comes from age-value.[2] Monuments can be "conspicuously inconspicuous," de-noticing us until something vandalizes or threatens to remove them.[3] They garner the attention of various people, who then become the monuments' publics.[4] Although they can seem like official projects of the state, monuments are usually the undertakings of small numbers of stakeholders. Their existences can be problematic because they reflect and endorse certain values in the contemporary public realm.[5] My thesis analyzes two monuments in South Africa whose values, perspectives, and ideologies compete in public space: the Voortrekker Monument, a symbol of apartheid and white supremacy in Pretoria, South Africa and Freedom Park, its monumental counterpart that aims to offer a different, more inclusive narrative of South Africa.

An overview of the South African system of apartheid provides the necessary historical context to understand the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park. In his memoir, *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood*, Trevor Noah, the biracial black and white South

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[1] S. Giedion et al., "Nine Points on Monumentality," in *Architecture You and Me: The Diary of a Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1943), 48.

[2] Alois Riegl, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origins," trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, in *Oppositions*, n. 25 (Fall 1983), 38.

[3] Georges Bataille, "Architecture," in Neil Leich (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 21.

[4] Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, Vol. 14, Number 1 (Winter 2002): 49-90, https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/26277.

[5] Dell Upton, "Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville," Confederate Monuments and Civic Values in the Wake of Charlottesville (Society of Architectural Historians, September 13, 2017), https://www.sah.org/publications-and-research/sah-blog/sah-blog/2017/09/13/confederate-monuments-and-civic-values-in-the-wake-of-charlottesville.

African host of *The Daily Show*, a U.S. based comedy show, airing with Noah as host since 2015, describes the system of apartheid as "apart hate."[7] He writes that the system's origins trace back to 1652, when the Dutch East India Company established Kaapstad, present-day Cape Town, as a trading colony.[9] Over the centuries, descendants of the Dutch settlers, known as Afrikaners, developed distinctive cultural practices and even a language, known as Afrikaans. In 1948, white Afrikaner power holders legally concretized apartheid, the system of racial oppression targeting the black South African majority. This oppression manifested itself spatially, socially, economically, politically, and legally. Noah conceives of this systematized oppression as racism perfected.[10] By way of describing the Immorality Act of 1927, which "'prohibit[ed] illicit carnal intercourse between Europeans and natives and other acts in relation thereto,'" Noah asserts that apartheid legislations made his existence a crime. His survival, however, and the survival of other people of biracial identities, attests to the unsustainability of separating societies by constructs like race through policies like the Immorality Act of 1927.[11]

The racialized inequalities of apartheid were jarring: by the 1950s, the South African Nationalist government forcibly removed black people from their residences, it imposed Bantu Education, and passed more apartheid laws.[12] These inequalities and injustices heightened the resistance of opposition groups like the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, and the Pan-Africanist Congress in the 1940s-70s.[13] As these dissenters mobilized, especially in these latter decades of apartheid, however, the South African government relied

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[7] Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*, (New York: Random House Publishing Group, 2016), ch. 1, Kindle.

[9] Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*, ch. 2, Kindle.

[10] Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*, ch. 2, Kindle.

[11] Trevor Noah, *Born a Crime*, ch. 2. Kindle.

[12] Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa: Conquest, Apartheid, Democracy*, (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2012): 108, Accessed March 12, 2021.

[13] Nigel Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, ch. 5.

increasingly on violence and police force to suppress their resistance. Artists like Gavin Jantjes, who himself classified as "Coloured," have captured the brutality of protest and resistance in South Africa during apartheid (Figure 1). By creating his *A South African Coloring Book*, 1974-75, a series of silkscreens depicting photographic collages of items like his race identification card, images of massacres like the Sharpesville Massacre of 1960, and various types of text, Jantjes allows his suppressed voice to be heard amidst the "culture of silence" imposed on oppressed people in South Africa through colonialism.[14] By the end of the 20th century, however, economic recessions, international pressure, the 1990 release of political prisoners like Nelson Mandela, a key anti-apartheid activist, and other factors played roles in the abolishment of apartheid.

At the end of legal apartheid in 1994, President Nelson Mandela, the first president of the new democratic South Africa pushed the social paradigm of a Rainbow Nation, which characterizes society as reconciliatory, multicultural, and equitable.[15] Part of this push included the Government of National Unity's establishment of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which would initiate the process of reconciliation in the nation. Using jural, ritual, memorial, and therapeutic methods, the TRC sought to uncover the extent, causes, and nature of abuses people suffered during apartheid.[16] Its formal aim was "to facilitate national unity through public testimony of gross human rights violations that occurred within or outside of the nation between March 1, 1960, and May 10, 1994."[17] In addition to these measures, the

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[14] Elizabeth Manchester, "'Dead', Gavin Jantjes, 1974–5," Tate, September 2005, https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jantjes-dead-p78656.

[15] Kim De Raedt, "Building the Rainbow Nation. A Critical Analysis of the Role of Architecture in Materializing a Post-Apartheid South African Identity," *Afrika Focus* 25, no. 1 (February 14, 2012), 7, https://doi.org/10.21825/af.v25i1.4960.

[16] Shannen L. Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," in *Biko's Ghost*, The Iconography of Black Consciousness (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 211, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctt15hvz3n.10.

[17] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 211.

TRC also finalized a list of propositions in their Reparations and Rehabilitations Policies in 1998 for the President and Parliament to review and implement.[18] One specific form of symbolic reparations that the Commission proposed was to build "memorials and monuments [that] will commemorate the victories and the conflicts of the past, … to make sure that the abuses people have suffered do not happen again."[19] Freedom Park responds directly to the TRC's proposition, and the choice of its siting in such close proximity to the Voortrekker Monument puts it in dialogue with the apartheid-era symbol of Afrikaner sovereignty.[20]

Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument: an overview

At his Freedom Day speech on April 27, 1999 at Umtata in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, President Nelson Mandela, the first democratically elected president of South Africa, promised the construction of Freedom Park. He stated: "It is therefore a weakness on our part, that we have yet to create a monument to remember them and all South Africans who sacrificed so that we should be free."[21] Moreover, he declared that "the day should not be far off, when we shall have a people's shrine, a Freedom Park, where we shall honor with all the dignity they deserve, those who endured pain so we should experience the joy of freedom."[22] The realization of this monument began a year later.

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[18] Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, "TRC/Reparation and Rehabilitation Transcripts," TRC/Reparation and rehabilitation transcripts (The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 1998), https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/reparations/.

[19] Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee, "TRC/Reparation and Rehabilitation Transcripts," Proposal 3.2.

[20] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "The History of the Park," Freedom Park (Department of Sport, Art and Culture), accessed March 11, 2021, https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/about-us/overview/history-of-freedom-park.html.

[21] Nelson Mandela, "Address by President Nelson Mandela at Freedom Day Celebrations, Umtata," Nelson Rohihlahla Mandela (South African Government), accessed March 11, 2021, http://www.mandela.gov.za/mandela_speeches/1999/990427_freedomday.htm.

[22] Nelson Mandela, "Address by President Nelson Mandela."

According to Freedom Park's website, accessed in September 2020, the South African government launched Freedom Park on June 1, 2000, and the Freedom Park Trust (FPT) formed a year later to oversee the completion of the project.[23] Over the next two years, the FPT held a design competition for the site, organized a series of focus groups, and administered surveys to solicit public input about the site and its construction.[24] After its first phase of construction was complete, the monument opened to the public in March 2004.[25] Its corporate mission, as described by Freedom Park reports, is to "provide a pioneering and empowering heritage destination in order to mobilise for reconciliation and nation building in our country; to reflect upon our past, improving our present and building our future as a united nation; and to contribute continentally and internationally to the formation of better human understanding among nations and people."[26] The monument's planners have attempted to fulfill this mission through certain elements at the park: for example, *Isivivane*, a symbolic resting place for people whose lives were lost in the freedom struggle in South Africa and around the world; a Gallery of Heroes, at which visitors can learn about iconic heroes of the struggle to end apartheid; *Moshate*, a diplomatic gathering place for government figures; the Pan African Archives, a hub for indigenous knowledge production; among other elements.

Aside from its unique role as a site of reconciliation, heritage site, national monument, and self-proclaimed indigenous knowledge hub, Freedom Park is also one of many monuments erected in South Africa after apartheid's legal end that interacts with apartheid-era monuments—in this case, the Voortrekker Monument. Visible from Freedom Park in the Freedom Park's

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[23] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "The History of the Park."

[24] Sabine Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," In *Landscape of Memory: Commemorative Monuments, Memorials and Public Statuary in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, (Boston: BRILL, 2009), 215-218.

[25] Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," 221.

[26] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "Annual Report 2018/2019" (Freedom Park, 2019), https://www.freedompark.co.za/images/annualreports/2019/2019_Freedom_Park_Annual_Report.pdf, B.

official online tour, the racist, white supremacist monument commemorates the so-called Great

Trek, in which the descendants of the Dutch settlers from the Cape Colony emigrated inland in

1835 to escape British imperial rule.[27] According to Elizabeth Rankin, Emeritus Professor at the

University of Auckland who received her PhD in Art History from the University of the

Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, the journeys of the emigrants "have assumed iconic significance

as the foundation myth of Afrikanerdom in nationalist discourses."[28] This mythology of

beginnings materializes at the site in the form of exhibits and displays that venerate the

expedition and heroize specific Boer trekkers such as Piet Retief. In the Voortrekker

Monument's Historical Frieze, the mythology is constructed in part through a highly curated

selection of events that depicts the journey of the Great Trek as a drama, with the Voortrekkers

as protagonists and a story-like beginning, climax, and conclusion.[29] Moreover, the frieze's

materiality—Apennine marble, the same stone from which Michelangelo supposedly created his

sculptures—links the work with Michelangelo Buonarotti, a famous Renaissance "master."[30]

Furthermore, battle scenes depicting the domination of orderly Boer civilization over the

swirling chaos of Zulu barbarism recalls the epic battles of Greek mythology, sculpted in relief in

monumental Western sanctuaries.

    In my thesis, I seek to identify the ways in which Freedom Park engages with its

apartheid-era counterpart, the Voortrekker Monument with respect to their conceptualizations

and national functions. I also investigate the extent to which Freedom Park "counters" the

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[27] Elizabeth Rankin, "A Janus-Like Juncture: Reconciling Past and Present at the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park," in *Public Art in South Africa*, ed. Kim Miller and Brenda Schmahmann, Bronze Warriors and Plastic Presidents (Indiana University Press, 2017): 4, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt20060c0.5.

[28] Rankin, "A Janus-Like Juncture," 4.

[29] Moerdijk, *Official* Guide, 38.

[30] Interestingly, Giorgio Vasari mythologizes Michelangelo's own biography in the *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, published in 1550.

Voortrekker Monument, drawing on James E. Young's seminal text, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," on countermonuments.[31] Lastly, I examine how virtual encounters of these sites through various media such as geographical information systems and official online tours alter and enhance the tourism aims of the sites. The investigation of the conceptual and virtual interplays between Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument underscore my inquiry. My examination of the monuments privileges virtual encounters, a generative perspective considering the ways in which global citizens can "visit" monuments from different places and historical moments with increasing interactivity through digital means in the present day.

Methods

I compare the conceptualizations of Freedom Park and Voortrekker Monument primarily because I was unable to visit the two monuments in person during the Summer of 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Because I was unable to view the physical monuments in South Africa, I opted to compare the two monuments based on the ideas that influenced their making, which do not necessarily require a physical encounter with the sites. To understand the conceptualizations of the two monuments, I rely on primary documents about the two monuments by individuals from the Freedom Park Trust and the Central People's Monument Committee. I also analyze the texts that Dr. Wally Mongane Serote produced in conceptualizing Freedom Park and Dr. Gerard Moerdijk in conceptualizing the Voortrekker Monument. However, there are other ways of studying monuments, which I do not cover: for example, its spatial qualities, as Sabine Marschall argues.[32]

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[31] James E Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 271, https://doi.org/10.1086/448632.

[32] Sabine Marschall, "Monuments and Affordance: Multisensory Bodily Engagements with the Landscape of Memory in South Africa," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines* 57, no. 227 (3) (2017): 676.

Even though I could not visit the monuments in person, I do explore the monuments virtually. While the Google Earth's Street View function and certain virtual tours can enable its users to "move" through representations of the physical space in and around the monuments with some degree of "reality," these capabilities are limited at the Voortrekker Monument and completely unavailable at Freedom Park. However, even if both monuments had Street View capabilities, encountering the monuments through their online tours would still differ from in-person experiences. Rather than seeing the virtual encounters as proxies for how they exist in physical space, I scrutinize the representations of the monuments available via their virtual tours as visual objects distinct from their counterparts in lived space.

I justify my contemporary virtual experiences, impressions, and perceptions of Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument using art historian Keith Moxey's idea that art from specific historical timelines, in this case, apartheid and post-apartheid South African ones, has a unique capacity to elicit and shape present responses. The method of understanding the two South African monuments through contemporary virtual encounters also finds its validity in Moxey's idea that visual objects of the past have contemporary presences, or engagements with viewers "that stray from the cultural agendas for which it was conceived and which may indeed affect us in a manner that sign systems fail regulate."[33] Studying the monuments in this way allows me to complicate the examinations of my objects of study: the analyses of the monuments through their specific historical and art historical contexts and through their contemporary virtual presences in South Africa can mutually enhance each other.

The ideas of French philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, who argues that the concept of anachronism has great utility in art historical studies, further convinced me of the

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[33] Keith P. F. Moxey, *Visual Time: the Image in History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 55.

meaningfulness of studying contemporary encounters with the monuments on digital platforms.

He writes:[34]

> Before an image, however old it may be, the present never ceases to reshape, provided that the dispossession of the gaze has not entirely given way to the vain complacency of the "specialist." Before an image, however recent, however contemporary it may be, the past never ceases to reshape, since this image only becomes thinkable in a construction of the memory, if not of the obsessions. Before an image, finally, we have to humbly recognize this fact: that it will probably outlive us, that before it we are the fragile element, the transient element, and that before us it is the element of the future, the element of permanence.[35] (Didi-Huberman, 33)

The "living" nature of visual objects allows me to study Freedom Park and the Voortrekker Monument not just as historical symbols during and after apartheid or as objects to study in light of art historical discourse on monuments, but as objects that can create encounters for beholders in the present-day.

In light of Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne's argument about the importance of citing broadly yet conscientiously to resist unethical hierarchies of knowledge, I aim to consult a wide array of sources.[36] In my thesis I cite authors who are based in the African continent and in the West. Instead of citing only academic sources, I also utilize credibly publicly accessible sources such as South African History Online, which is an online archive of historical information that South African universities produce for South African and international audiences.

"Chapter 1" contextualizes the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park within the South African history of apartheid. I provide background about the Great Trek, which serves as a foundation myth for the Voortrekker Monument. I also describe the rise of Afrikaner power and

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[34] Moxey, *Visual Time*, 141.

[35] Georges Didi-Huberman, "Before the Image, Before Time: The Sovereignty of Anachronism," in *Compelling Visuality*, ed. Claire Farago and Robert Zwijnenberg (University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5749/j.ctttc70.5.

[36] Carrie Mott and Daniel Cockayne, "Citation Matters: Mobilizing the Politics of Citation toward a Practice of 'Conscientious Engagement,'" *A Journal of Feminist Geography* 24, no. 7 (June 13, 2017): 956, https://doi.org/https://doi-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1339022.

the institution of apartheid. I present the construction of the Voortrekker Monument as a

legitimization and symbol of that rise to power. I also offer a brief overview of the events that

led to apartheid's legal demise. I contextualize Freedom Park's construction through mention of

the reconciliation and reparation efforts of the first democratically-elected administration after

apartheid's end in South Africa.

In "Chapter 2," I compare the conceptualizations of the Voortrekker Monument and

Freedom Park, as the Central People's Monument Committee envisioned it at the former and the

Freedom Park Trust at the latter, to specify the ways in which Freedom Park relates to its

apartheid-era counterpart. I argue that Freedom Park's interactions with the Voortrekker

Monument are inconsistent and contradictory: at once, Freedom Park both opposes the

Voortrekker Monument in its perspective about South Africa's history and accepts the physical

persistence of the apartheid-era monument to facilitate the South African government's

reconciliation narratives.

In "Chapter 3," I analyze contemporary relationships between the Voortrekker

Monument and Freedom Park through their virtual presences on Google Earth and their official

online tours. I also touch on the new, post-apartheid emphasis of the Voortrekker Monument as a

tourism site. By way of rebranding the Voortrekker Monument, CEO Gert Opperman

depoliticizes the monument from its original intentions to legitimize the Afrikaner rise to power

and establish a distinctly white Afrikaner national identity for South Africa. In changing its aims,

the Voortrekker Monument sheds its racist past and becomes a mundane museum of Afrikaner

culture. Despite the verbal assertions of the monument's new life, as reconfigured by CEO Gert

Opperman, however, the Voortrekker Monument continues to bear traces of its original design

and form. I argue in this chapter that the virtual tour reflects the depoliticization of the site by

allowing viewers to engage primarily with the formal qualities of the site rather than its symbolic meaning and history, a metamorphosis that Freedom Park is unable to address.

In the "Conclusion," I connect the sub-arguments of Chapters 2 and 3 to make the ultimate claim that Freedom Park fails to effectively respond to and address the Voortrekker Monument because it exhibits internal contradictions in its attitude toward the Voortrekker Monument and is unable to account for the Voortrekker Monument's dynamism: its capacity to sanitize itself of the controversial meanings of its past and create a new life fixated on tourism. I also connect my discussion of monuments to the countermonuments of post-World War II Germany, the President's Task Force on Untold Stories and Disenfranchised Populations at Emory University, and Stone Mountain in Atlanta, Georgia to emphasize the importance of critically analyzing old and new monuments.
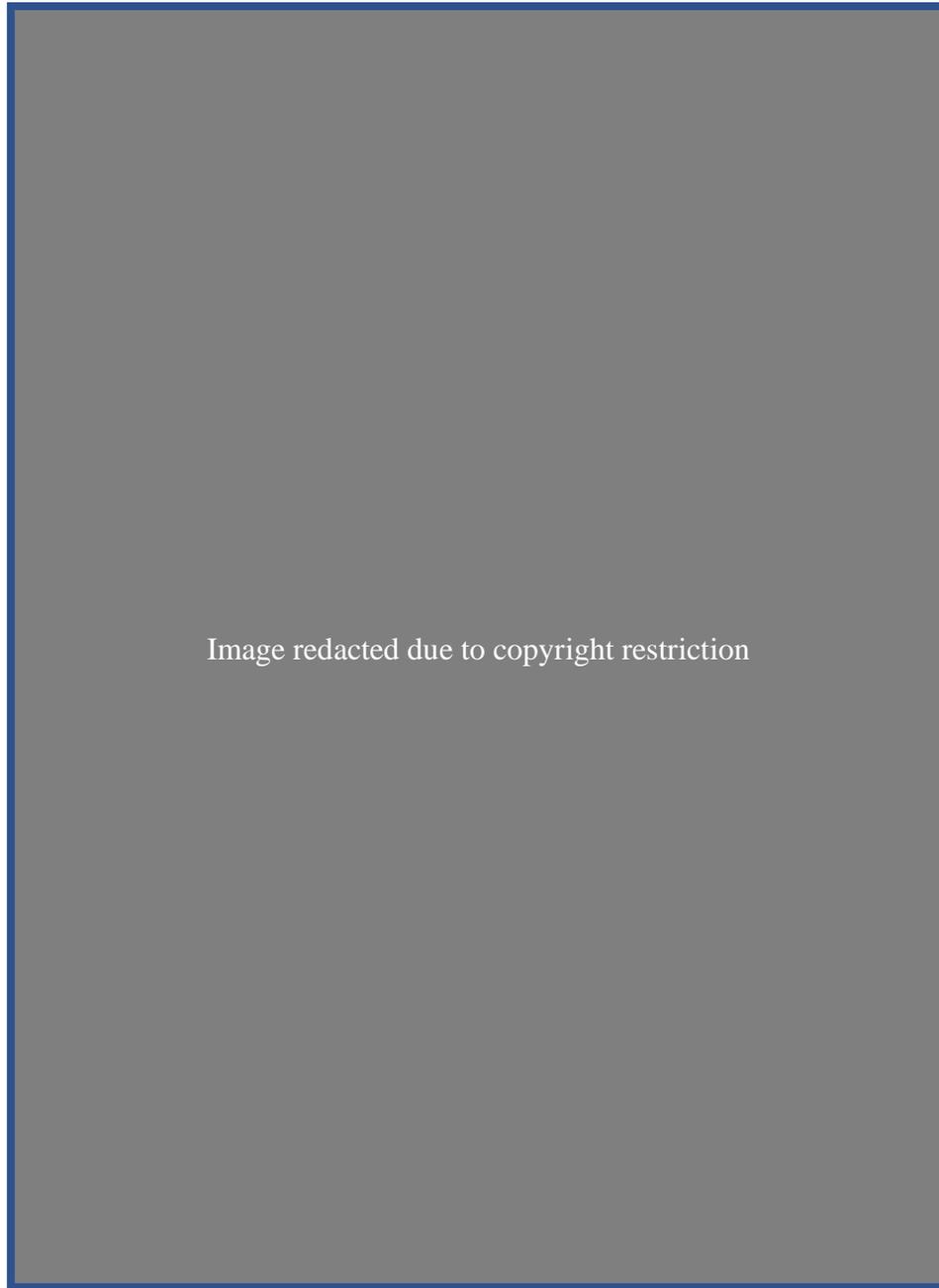
Introduction: Figures

Figure 1: Gavin Jantjes, "Dead," from *A South African Coloring Book*, 1974-75. Screenprint on card. 6.02 cm x 4.52 cm. Image removed due to copyright restrictions. Image viewable at https://www.tate-images.com/preview.asp?image=P78656.

Chapter 1: Contextualizing the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park

Understanding the events of the Great Trek of 1835-1846 and the Battle of Blood River

of 1838 helps to historically contextualize the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument, an

apartheid-era monument designed by Gerard Moerdijk and inaugurated on December 16th, 1949.

<u>The Great Trek</u>

Threatened by British imperial rule in the Cape Colony in the early 1800s, which

politically and culturally alienated Dutch colonists and outlawed slavery in 1834, waves of Dutch

colonists moved inland between 1835-1846. This event was later known as the Great Trek.

Taking off in ox-wagons, these Dutch-descended agrarian emigrants, also called the

Voortrekkers, and black and colored employees of the Voortrekkers, moved northward into the

Transvaal, today's Gauteng and Limpopo provinces; others moved north-eastward into Durban,

or today's KwaZulu-Natal, and today's Free State province (Figure 2).[38] Piet Retief, one of the

Voortrekker leaders, moved into the latter north-eastern part of South Africa, a territory

belonging to the AmaZulu King Dingaan.[39] Upon reaching the AmaZulu area, Retief negotiated

with the king to secure a tract of land on which his following of emigrants could settle. On

February 6, 1938, Retief accepted King Dingaan's cordial invitation to visit his royal kraal, or

village; however, Dingaan and his regiments had organized an attack against the Voortrekker

leader and a number of his men. The reasons for the attack are contested, but some possibilities

include Retief's failure to comply to the terms of the negotiations, such as obtaining cattle,

horses, and guns for King Dingaan; the lack of respect for King Dingaan's authority that the king

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[38] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism," South African History Online (SAHO, December 12, 2016), https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/december-16-and-construction-afrikaner-nationalism.; The Heritage Foundation, *Voortrekker Monument*, Matterport, Inc. and 3D Virtual Africa, The Voortrekker Monument, n.d., online 3D photography tour, https://vtm.org.za/en/home/.

[39] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

sensed from the Voortrekkers when they prematurely settled on AmaZulu land before

negotiations were finalized; or even the threat they posed as a powerful enemy.[40]

The Battle of Blood River of 1838

In any case, Retief's death, seen as a murder by the Voortrekkers, led to the Battle of

Blood River on December 16, 1838. During this battle, the heavily outnumbered Voortrekkers,

led by Andries Pretorius, defeated the AmaZulu warriors near Ncome River, leaving pools of

blood that turned the river's water red, hence the name of the battle.[41] After the Battle of Blood

River in 1838, Natal, Transvaal, and the Orange Free State were established and governed as

republics politically autonomous from the British. Although Natal was annexed by the British

soon after its establishment, the white settlers beyond the Cape Colony, who became known as

the Afrikaners, began organizing language and literature programs to build their political and

cultural national identity.[42]

Tensions between the British and Boers, or the Dutch-descended farmers, in the

Transvaal republic continued. The First Anglo-Boer War ensued in 1880 and ended in a Boer

win after the victory at the Battle of Majuba in 1881.[43] Paul Kruger, a key "champion" of Boer

independence in Transvaal, spoke at a state festival that year and attributed the wins at Majuba

and Blood River in 1838 to God's divine favor.[44] December 16th was eventually officially

designated the name Dingaan's Day in 1908, a day commemorating the birth of the Afrikaner

nation and Voortrekkers' belief in the triumph of Christianity over the indigenous South

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[40] South African History Online, "Origins of the Battle of Blood River 1838," South African History Online (SAHO, June 8, 2011), https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/origins-battle-blood-river-1838.

[41] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

[42] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

[43] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

[44] South African History Online, "Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger," South African History Online (SAHO, April 19, 2011), https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/stephanus-johannes-paulus-kruger.; South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

Africans, whom they deemed barbarous.[45] Thankful to God for the victory, Paul Kruger,

proposed in 1888 that a monument commemorating the Voortrekkers should be constructed. The

Sentrale Volksmonumentekomitee [Central People's Monuments Committee] was founded in

April 1931 to plan such a site.[46] Construction for the monument began on July 13, 1937.[47]

In 1938, a century after the victory at the Battle of Blood River, the Afrikaans Language

and Culture Association organized a reenactment of the Great Trek, the culmination of which

was the laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument on December 16th of that

year. Mrs. J.C. Muller, Mrs. J.C. Preller, and Mrs. K.F. Ackerman, three female descendants of

important Voortrekker leaders, laid the stone.[48] According to Albert M. Grundlingh, Head of the

History Department at Stellenbosch University in the Western Cape Province in South Africa,

the centenary celebrations, which contained the rhetoric of "salvation," "struggle," and

"survival," the nostalgia of an idealized past, and highly moralistic content, marked the populist

phase within the rise of Afrikaner nationalism.[49]

Apartheid 1948-1994

In 1948, the National Party, the political party of Afrikaner ethnic nationalists, rose to

power and legalized "apartheid," the Afrikaans term for "apartness." This system formalized the

pre-existing racial segregation into a legal institution, the realization of the Afrikaner's decades-

long pursuit of political power.[50] The Voortrekker Monument was inaugurated on December

16th, 1949, a year later, drawing record-breaking crowds to "'engender pride in the nation of

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[45] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."
[46] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 24.
[47] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."
[48] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."
[49] Albert Grundlingh, "The Trajectory and Dynamics of Afrikaner Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: An Overview," in *Troubling Images*, ed. Brenda Schmahmann, Federico Freschi, and Lize Van Robbroeck (Wits University Press, 2020), 28.
[50] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

heroes which endured the hardships of the Great Trek.'"[51] Moreover, it was seen as revival of the

original spirit, language, and clothing of the Voortrekkers during the Great Trek.[52]

 Apartheid called for the separate but "equal" development and freedom of cultural

expression of all racial groups in South Africa.[53] While the forced separation of racial groups had

been a reality decades before apartheid was legalized with the Land Act of 1913, the institution

of apartheid further diminished the collective power of non-white racial groups. It did so by

separating them from each other and dividing black South Africans tribally.[54] The Population

Registration Act of 1950 classified people into four broad racial categories: white, colored

(mixed race), Bantu (black South Africans), and Indians.[55] Distributions of land through various

Land Acts were unequal, with the white minority gaining entitlement to 93% of the country's

arable land.[56] Moreover, black South Africans were pushed to Bantustans, or black homelands,

in 1959 through the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, and often forcibly so,

disenfranchising black South Africans from involvement in national politics.[57] Although it was

meant to maintain equality, apartheid restricted, divided, separated, and limited people; it also

provided or withheld privileges bodies on the basis of race.[58]

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[51] South African History Online, "December 16 and the Construction of Afrikaner Nationalism."

[52] Robyn Kimberley Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory in South Africa: The Voortrekker Monument," Theory, Culture & Society 29, no. 6 (November 2012): 148, https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276412438596.

[53] South African History Online, "A History of Apartheid in South Africa," South African History Online (SAHO, March 6, 2016), https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/history-apartheid-south-africa.

[54] South African History Online, "A History of Apartheid in South Africa."

[55] Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa,* 102-103.

[56] South African History Online, "The Native Land Act Is Passed," South Africa History Online (SAHO, June 14, 2013), https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/native-land-act-passed.

[57] Padraig O'Malley, "The O'Malley Archives," 1959. Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act No 46 - The O'Malley Archives (Nelson Mandela Foundation), accessed April 13, 2021, https://omalley.nelsonmandela.org/omalley/index.php/site/q/03lv01538/04lv01828/05lv01829/06lv01899.htm.

[58] Alta Steenkamp, "Apartheid to Democracy: Representation and Politics in the Voortrekker Monument and Red Location Museum," *Arq* 10, no. 3-4 (May 21, 2007): 249, https://doi.org/10.1017/S1359135506000352.

As the oppression, repression, and injustice of apartheid intensified in the form of banishments, exiles, political executions, and detentions, the resistance to apartheid also magnified.[59] However, the history of black political protest far predates apartheid. In 1912, black, predominantly middle-class to elite men in Bloemfontein in 1912 to form the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), the mission of which was to exert political influence through journalism, delegations, and petitions.[60] The SANNC later renamed itself the African National Congress (ANC). With beginnings before the formal institution of apartheid, the ANC was one of the most prominent resistance groups during the decades-long institution of apartheid.[61]

During the 1960 Sharpesville Massacre, the police shot unarmed members of the Pan African Congress, a branch of the ANC, in Sharpesville, a black township in Transvaal located about 131 kilometers from the Voortrekker Monument. After the massacre, the ANC and other resistance groups began to mobilize military branches.[62] South African artist Gavin Jantjes, born in 1948 at the beginning of apartheid, exemplifies the violence of the Sharpesville Massacre in one of the pages of his *A South African Coloring Book* of 1974-75. The screen printed collages often compile materials like Jantjes' racial identification card, required after the 1950 Population Registration Act, photographs, newsprints, printed, stenciled, and/or handwritten texts on a gridded background.[63] *Dead*, features two images of the victims—67 dead and 186 wounded—of the Sharpesville Massacre and the stenciled word "DEAD" (Figure 3).[64] Not only does Jantjes'

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[59] Tembeka Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park,* 1.
[60] Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa, 90.*
[61] Worden, *The Making of Modern South Africa*, 89.
[62] South Africa History Online, "African National Congress ANC."
[63] Elizabeth Manchester, "'Dead', Gavin Jantjes, 1974–5," Tate (Tate, September 2005), https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/jantjes-dead-p78656.
[64] Manchester, "'Dead', Gavin Jantjes, 1974–5."

work lay bare the brutality of the apartheid regime, but it also gives him a voice in the colonial

"culture of silence" that apartheid imposed on colored people like him.[65]

<u>The Downfall of Apartheid</u>

Student activists organized a march for the morning of June 16th, 1976 to protest the

imposition of Afrikaans in Bantu Education.[66] The plan was that students from multiple

townships would meet at Orlando Stadium in the township of Soweto, a suburb of Johannesburg

to discuss the Department of Bantu Education and Afrikaans.[67] Student representatives would

then write and sign a petition for the Department of Bantu Education to review.[68] After the

march began, however, police forces opened fire on thousands of black schoolchildren from the

black township of Soweto, causing many injuries and even the death of a black student named

Hector Pieterson.[69]

Ultimately the Soweto Uprising of 1976 caused out outrage, domestic and international.

South Africa saw even more protests and demonstrations after the Uprising, and the violence of

the police force garnered negative attention from around the world.[70] Moreover, rates of

unemployment and inflation were high in the 1980s—symptoms of a declining economy—and

international trade sanctions were in place, increasing the economic pressures to end apartheid.[71]

The increasing political power of grassroots organizations, the positive shift in the legal

perception of the ANC, and the ideological implications of international events such as the

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[65] Manchester, "'Dead', Gavin Jantjes, 1974–5.'"

[66] Sibongile Mkhabela, "Action and Fire in Soweto, June 1976," in *Students Must Rise: Youth Struggle in South Africa before and beyond Soweto '76*, ed. Anne Heffernan and Noor Nieftagodien (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2018), 60.

[67] Mkhabela, "Action and Fire in Soweto," 60.

[68] Mkhabela, "Action and Fire in Soweto," 60.

[69] Mkhabela, "Action and Fire in Soweto," 61.

[70] South African History Online, "The June 16 Soweto Youth Uprising," South African History Online (SAHO), accessed March 13, 2021, https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/june-16-soweto-youth-uprising.

[71] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 195.

easing of Cold War tensions and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 also led to apartheid's demise.[72] That year, Pieter Botha of the National Party instituted reforms to appease the dissenting international community.[73] However, F.W. de Klerk eventually replaced him due to public pressure.[74]

On February 2, 1990, F. W. de Klerk, Prime Minister of South Africa at the time, instituted a death penalty moratorium and lifted restrictions on thirty-three opposition groups, beginning the process of apartheid's legal end.[75] Nine days later, he released Nelson Mandela, a prominent leader of the African National Congress Party who was imprisoned on June 12, 1964, and other high-profile political prisoners. By the end of February 1991, the Land Acts of 1913, 1936, and 1946, the Population Registration Act of 1950, and the Group Areas Act of 1950 were abolished.[76] The country held its first democratic election in April 1994, with just under 87% voter participation, and elected Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress Party as President of South Africa.[77]

The Government of National Unity established the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 1995, a year after apartheid's legal end, to initiate the process of reconciliation in the nation. Using jural, ritual, memorial, and therapeutic methods, the TRC sought to uncover the extent, causes, and nature of the egregious human rights violations and abuses suffered during apartheid.[78] Its formal aim was "to facilitate national unity through public testimony of gross human rights violations that occurred within or outside of the nation

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[72] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 195.
[73] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 195.
[74] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 195.
[75] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 195.
[76] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 196
[77] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 204
[78] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 211.

between March 1, 1960, and May 10, 1994."[79] According to Jean and John L. Comaroff, two professors of African and African-American Studies and Anthropology at Harvard University, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission resurfaced these repressed memories to allow the nation to have a fresh start after the end of apartheid.[80]

In addition to uncovering suppressed memories about human rights violations, the TRC also designed a list of propositions in their Reparations and Rehabilitations Policies in 1997 for the President and Parliament to review and implement.[81] One specific form of symbolic reparations that the Commission proposed was to build "memorials and monuments [that] will commemorate the victories and the conflicts of the past, … to make sure that the abuses people have suffered do not happen again."[82] Creating Freedom Park was the response to this proposition.

At his Freedom Day speech on April 27, 1999 at Umtata in the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, President Nelson Mandela promised the construction of Freedom Park. He stated, "It is therefore a weakness on our part, that we have yet to create a monument to remember them and all South Africans who sacrificed so that we should be free."[83] Moreover, he declared that "the day should not be far off, when we shall have a people's shrine, a Freedom Park, where we shall honor with all the dignity they deserve, those who endured pain so we should experience the joy of freedom."[84] Thus, the South African government launched Freedom Park on June 1,

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[79] Hill, "Transitions and Truths in a New Democracy," 211.

[80] Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, "History on Trial," in *Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America Is Evolving Toward Africa* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 133.

[81] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "A Summary of Reparation and Rehabilitation Policy, Including Proposals to Be Considered by the President," Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Republic of South Africa Department of Justice and Constitutional Development), accessed December 9, 2020, https://www.justice.gov.za/trc/reparations/summary.htm.

[82] Truth and Reconciliation Commission, "A Summary of Reparation and Rehabilitation Policy," Proposal 3.2.

[83] Nelson Mandela (April 27, 1999).

[84] Nelson Mandela (April 27, 1999).

2000, and the Freedom Park Trust was formed a year later to oversee the completion of the project.[85]

In 2002, the Freedom Park Trust held an international competition to select an architectural firm to design Freedom Park. The top three finalists were Pablo Castro of the New York-based OBRA Architects firm, Vladimir Djurovic and Imad Gemayel from Lebanon, and Peter To Tai Fai from Hong Kong.[86] However, the winners received no contracts, and the Freedom Park Trust opted instead for local architectural firms to design the site "in favour of a home-grown design informed by the specific South African context and rooted in local traditions."[87] Thus, the Truth selected Mashabane Rose Associates, Mpheti Morejele, and GAPP Architects and Urban Designers to design Freedom Park instead.[88]

After the first phase of Freedom Park's construction was completed in 2004, the monument opened to its first visitors.[89] According to Sabine Marschall, Professor of Cultural and Heritage Tourism at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Durban, South Africa, construction of the monument continued into the end of 2008.[90] In 2009, the Freedom Park Cultural Institution replaced the Freedom Park Trust as the site's official management organization.[91]

The monument contains many elements, the nomenclature of which is based on official South African languages. Some of the elements include S'khumbuto (siSwati), which contains the Wall of Names, the Amphitheater, the Eternal Flame, and Isivivane, the spiritual resting

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[85] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "About Us," Freedom Park (Department of Arts and Culture), accessed December 9, 2020, https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/about-us/overview.html.

[86] Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," 216.

[87] Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," 216.

[88] Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," 216.

[89] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "The History of the Park," Freedom Park, Department of Sport, Art and Culture, Accessed March 11, 2021, https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/about-us/overview/history-of-freedom-park.html.

[90] Marschall, "Freedom Park as a national site of identification," 220.

[91] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "The History of the Park."

place for all lives who were lost in the liberation cause. It also contains the //hapo Museum that

chronicles the history of the African continent from 3.6 billion years ago to the achievement of

democracy.[92]

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[92] Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park*, 4.

Chapter 1: Figures

Figure 2: Map of the Great Trek. Discott. 2014. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en).

Figure 3: Gavin Jantjes, "Dead," from *A South African Coloring Book*, 1974-75. Screenprint on card. 6.02 cm x 4.52 cm. Image removed due to copyright restrictions. Image viewable at https://www.tate-images.com/preview.asp?image=P78656.

Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 4: Screenshot of Freedom Park from its online tour. Freedom Park. 2011. Image removed due to copyright restriction.

Chapter 2: Freedom Park's Internal Contradictions

According to Daniel Herwitz, a University of Michigan Professor of Art and Design, 1990s South Africa experienced a "demonumentalizing moment," during which openness and redress were valued over domination and proclamation through stone.[95] This was due to the twofold narratives of redress during the immediate transition to democracy and the African Renaissance, which stressed the "renewal for South Africa and the African continent through a grafting of precolonial heritage and indigenous ways of knowing with neoliberal thinking for a rapidly globalizing, democratizing country."[96] With the Mandela Administration's emphasis on reconciliation after the legal demise of apartheid in 1994, the toppling, removal, or defacement of racist and white supremacist monuments were uncommon ways to grapple with apartheid monuments. Kim Miller and Brenda Schmahmann, two researchers at the University of Johannesburg, explain that in post-apartheid South Africa, "the overall approach was to enable diverse histories to be commemorated."[97] Thus, monumental and memorial forms that emphasize redress and indigenous knowledge proliferated on the South African landscape, the new monuments and memorials reworking the meanings of existing ones.[98] Freedom Park is one such example, and its physical situation on Salvokop Hill, which is 2.4 kilometers away from the Voortrekker Monument, reworks the meaning of the apartheid-era monument.

In characterizing the relationship between the two monuments, scholars like Martin J. Murray, Professor of Urban Planning at the University of Michigan, argue that Freedom Park in its conceptualization "counters" the Voortrekker Monument by "challeng[ing]" the

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[95] Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics*, 119.
[96] Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics*, 80.
[97] Miller and Schmahmann, "Introduction: Engaging with Public Art," xi.
[98] Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory," 161.

understanding of the South African past that materializes at the apartheid-era monument—a past

that resonates most with the Afrikaner people who had risen to power in 1948, a year before the

Voortrekker Monument's inauguration.[99] Thomas Blaser, Professor of Sociology at the

University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, concurs: to him, Freedom Park

narrates a more inclusive history of South Africa that disproves the history that the Voortrekker

Monument tells and embodies.[100] However, Freedom Park does not just counterattack the

Voortrekker Monument. Based on its heavy emphasis on reconciliation, Freedom Park also

counterbalances it as an alternative perspective on South Africa's past, especially through its

physical siting nearby the Voortrekker Monument. Thus, in this chapter, I argue that Freedom

Park reworks the meaning of the apartheid-era monument in uneven ways, at times counter

striking the understandings of the South African past that Voortrekker Monument crystallizes,

and at times more mildly offsetting its subjectivities with alternative perspectives to keep in line

with South Africa's immediate post-apartheid ideals of reconciliation and tolerance.

Monuments and Countermonuments

Considering the analysis of this chapter hinges upon how Freedom Park relates to the

Voortrekker Monument, I would like to first distinguish between general and precise usages of

the term countermonument. Professor James E. Young, a scholar of English and Judaic & Near

Eastern Studies at University of Massachusetts Amherst, defines the countermonument: a

"brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spac[e] conceived to challenge the very premise of

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[99] Martin J. Murray, "Collective Memory in Place: The Voortrekker Monument and the Hector Pieterson Memorial," in *Commemorating and Forgetting* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 90.
[100] Thomas Blaser, "A New South African Imaginary: Nation Building and Afrikaners in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *South African Historical Journal* 51 (November 2004): 191, https://doi-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/10.1080/02582470409464836.

[its] being."[101] Generally, these countermonuments, which proliferated in postwar Germany to commemorate and mourn individuals whose lives were lost in the Holocaust, challenged the monumental claims to permanence, immutability, and sacredness that often characterized fascist monuments in Nazi Germany.[102] Opposing these monumental tendencies, the countermonuments were self-abnegating, temporal, and meant to physically change over time.[103] Distinctively, the countermonument attempts to transform the act of remembering the past from a passive task to an active duty of its public.[104] Rather than fixing memory authoritatively and rigidly into the form of a monument, as did many of the monuments that the national-Socialist Nazis created before and during World War II, countermonuments invite active interaction from their publics—even if that means the violation and desecration of the countermonuments.[105] Ultimately, countermonuments in their conception subvert the qualities of traditional monumentality.

Freedom Park is not a countermonument. To the Freedom Park Trust, the monumental tendencies of the Voortrekker Monument, or monuments generally, were not suspect. Thus, in its conceptualization, Freedom Park has no self-critical, self-abnegating aspect. It neither vanishes, intentionally alters in form over time, nor invites desecration and violation as do many countermonuments in postwar Germany. In fact, Freedom Park itself often makes monumentalizing claims to a universal and everlasting relevance to the South African nation and society; distinguishes itself as a sacred space; and forwards a fixed understanding of the past,

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[101] James E Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (1992): 271, https://doi.org/10.1086/448632.

[102] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 277.

[103] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 277.

[104] Young, "The Counter-Monument," 274.

[105] James E. Young, "Memory/Monument," In *Critical Terms for Art History*, edited by Robert S. Nelson, and Richard Shiff. 2nd ed., The University of Chicago Press, 2003, https://proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/uchicagoah/memory_monument/0?institutionId=716.

albeit from a perspective that the system of apartheid and those who upheld it oppressed and silenced. Therefore, although the Freedom Park Trust conceptualized Freedom Park during what Herwitz considers "demonumentalizing" moment, it is neither *counter*monumental nor *un*monumental.[106]

<u>Reconciliation as a Process and Goal of Freedom Park</u>

Attaining reconciliation, or the overcoming of past distrust, hatred, and suspicion so that society members can heal and coexist, undergirds the manifold aims and goals of Freedom Park.[107] Freedom Park outlines its vision, mission, and objectives on its website, at least as of December 2020. Its vision is to be an icon of freedom and humanity both nationally and internationally.[108] Its four missions are to provide a "pioneering and empowering heritage destination in order to mobilize for reconciliation and nation building in [South Africa];" foster reflection about South Africa's past; build unity; and encourage human understanding among people and nations.[109] Moreover, the site's eight objectives include:

- Advocating for tolerance, inclusivity, transparency and accountability;
- Archiving and preserving South Africa's indigenous knowledge;
- Telling the South African story as it unfolds;
- Honoring those who gave their lives for South Africa's freedom;
- Providing a place where visitors can experience the diversity of our history and remembering loved ones who played a role in the country's history;
- Providing a venue where South Africa's unique heritage and cultures can be remembered, cherished and celebrated;
- Fostering a South African community spirit, by being a symbol of unity through diversity, and,
- Working with African and other international institutions to tell the story of Africa from an African perspective[110]

Clearly, reconciliation is the common denominator of the many objectives of the monument.

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[106] Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics*, 119.
[107] Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park*, 8.
[108] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "About Us."
[109] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "About Us."
[110] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "About Us."

The process of reconciliation happens in three stages at Freedom Park. According to Dr. Tembeka Ngcebetsha, a Senior Researcher at the Freedom Park Trust, the first stage of the reconciliation process is social transformation, which took place when the black majority of South Africans gained the right to vote in 1994, moving South Africa toward a democratic society.[111] The next stage, titled "Reconciliation," involves truth-telling and establishing a collective memory.

In her book describing the conceptual framework of reconciliation as the foundation of Freedom Park's conception, Dr. Ngcebetsha defines collective memory in the South African context as the process in which "both the perpetrator and victim [of apartheid] confront each other into a dialogue of truth-telling and understanding of the past which should lead to [the] unburdening of painful memories and circumstances, forgiveness, healing and restoration of social harmony."[112] The collective memory provides an "objective basis" on which individuals can move toward a shared future.[113] The emphasis on creating a shared future succeeds President Nelson Mandela's 1994 call to build South Africa into a rainbow nation, in which society lives with full human dignity.[120] The ideals of the Rainbow Nation—equity, reconciliation, and multiculturalism—shaped the conceptual foundation of reconciliation at Freedom Park. Ultimately, through the establishment of a collective memory with which both victims and perpetrators of apartheid identify, the new South African democracy can achieve a future of peace, coexistence, cooperation, social cohesion, and nation building.[121] Kim De Raedt, a Ghent

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[111] Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park*, 9.

[112] Tembeka Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park in Facilitation Reconciliation in South Africa: a site for cultural heritage education and political tourism* (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2016), 15.

[112] South Africa History Online, "African National Congress ANC," Accessed December 2020,

[113] Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park,* 14.

[120] Nelson Mandela Inaugural Address May 10 1994; Raedt, "Building the Rainbow Nation," 7.

[121] Ngcebethca, *The Role of Freedom Park*, 8.

University professor of Engineering and Architecture, elaborates on the Rainbow Nation social paradigm:[122]

> Sabine Marschall believes the Rainbow Nation idea came to serve as the so-called 'foundation myth' which needed to be shared and internalized by as many South Africans as possible in order to obtain a unified society, a nation. Such a nation, according to Benedict Anderson, is never the product of some kind of natural unity, but rather a fictitious political society. As the members of a nation can never continuously engage in face-to-face contact, the only awareness of the existence of a nation as one unified entity results from the 'image' they collectively have of it. (Raedt, 8).

In other words, the Rainbow Nation idea, which includes the process of reconciliation and the national collective memory that Freedom Park materializes, provides the illusion of social unity.

Forging social unity has a strategic political function: it trades retribution and justice for the more palatable ideal of reconciliation, allowing those who may have favored or benefited from apartheid to be more amenable to the new democratic society.[123] According to Blaser, such a symbolic social "construction" helps create feelings of belonging, which ultimately catalyzes the nation building process.[124] The Rainbow Nation foundation myth, which materializes at Freedom Park, functions in parallel ways to the foundation myth of the Great Trek, which the Voortrekker Monument concretized a year after the rise of National Party rule in 1948.

The Foundation Myth of the Voortrekker Monument

On April 4th, 1931, the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations formed the Central People's Monument Committee [CPMC] to erect a monument in honor of the Voortrekkers in time for the centenary celebration of the Great Trek in 1938.[125] Due to delays in selecting the monument's design and site and an economic depression, the CPMC decided not to inaugurate

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[122] Raedt, "Building the Rainbow Nation," 8.

[123] Blaser, "A New South African Imaginary," 185.

[124] Blaser, "A New South African Imaginary," 186.

[125] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 24.; Andrew Crampton, "The Voortrekker Monument, the Birth of Apartheid, and Beyond," *Political Geography* 20, no. 2 (February 2001): 226, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00062-7.

the monument at the centenary celebrations.[126] Rather than celebrating a completed monument at the centenary, three female descendants of key Voortrekker "heroes" laid the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument at the celebration. It was not until eleven years later, on December 16th, 1949, that the monument was inaugurated, with delays caused by World War II.[127]

The Voortrekker Monument legitimizes a white minority national identity by positioning the Great Trek as the foundation myth of a white South Africa. Pushed to leave the Cape Colony and Natal due to the increasingly isolating nature of British imperial rule in the two colonies, the Dutch descendants moved into the interior of South Africa to "establish a new home," according to Moerdijk, whom the CPMC commissioned to design the Voortrekker Monument.[128] In the architect's perspective, "[t]he Voortrekkers were the first white people to succeed in taming the interior of Africa" through the years-long emigration from the Cape Colony inland.[129]

The Historical Frieze at the Voortrekker Monument is viewable upon entering the Main Hall both in person and virtually through Google Earth and the official online tour. Afrikaner artists, Hennie Potgieter, Peter Kirchhoff, Frikkie Kruger, and Laurika Postma, sculpted the 92-meter-long Quercetta marble frieze from 1942-1944.[130] Peter Kirchhoff and Laurika Postma were trained in sculpture in Europe—Kirchhoff in Germany and Postma in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium.[131] Frikkie Kruger attended the Johannesburg Art School and Academy where he studied sculpture and copper work; Hennie Potgieter underwent training at the Witwatersrand Technical College.[132] While architect Gerard Moerdijk was largely non-

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[126] Crampton, "The Voortrekker Monument," 227.

[127] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 25; Crampton, "The Voortrekker Monument," 226.

[128] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 30.

[129] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 30.

[130] The Heritage Foundation, "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour," Pretoria: Pretoria, n.d., Plaque "Role Players in the Creation of the Historical Frieze," https://vtm.org.za/en/home/.

[131] The Heritage Foundation, "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour."

[132] The Heritage Foundation, "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour."

prescriptive about the frieze, he did approve the final plan and ensure cohesion of the frieze. The chiseling of the frieze took place in Italy, under the execution of artist Romano Romanelli, an arrangement orchestrated by Gerard Moerdijk, and was installed in the Voortrekker Monument between 1949-1950.[133]

The marble frieze, which wraps the walls of the Hall of Heroes, perhaps best communicates the origins of a white South Africa in the Great Trek. In Moerdijk's word, the Historical Frieze is "a symbolic document showing the Afrikaner's proprietary right to South Africa."[134] The frieze chronologically organizes twenty-seven events of the Great Trek, starting in 1835, when the Voortrekkers left the Cape Colony to the British recognition of the independence of Transvaal at the Sand River Convention in 1852. A committee of "experts": Dr. E. G. Jansen; Reverend Paul Nel; Dr. Gustav Preller; Professor I. D. Bosmon; and Professor S. P. Engelbrecht curated the events that would be included in the frieze.[135] The intent of the frieze was to "dramatize the material available and to present a story with a beginning, a climax, and a conclusion."[136] Some of the events sculpted into the frieze include skirmishes between the Voortrekkers and indigenous black South African groups such as the Matebele and the Battle of Blood River of 1838; negotiations between the Voortrekkers and named indigenous chiefs such as the Barolong chief, Maroka, and King Dingane of the AmaZulu people, as well as the movement of the Voortrekkers across geography, women and children supporting the male Voortrekkers, and the death of important Voortrekker "heroes" such as Piet Retief, among other scenes.[137]

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[133] The Heritage Foundation, "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour."

[134] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 34.

[135] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 38.

[136] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 38.

[137] The Heritage Foundation, "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour."

Portrayals of sacrifices and struggles, viewable virtually through the Voortrekker Monument's online tour, are critical in justifying the emigrants' stake to the South African interior. For example, Panel 13 posits the death of Piet Retief, an important Voortrekker leader, as a murder at the hands of the barbaric Zulu people (Figure 5).[138] The preceding panel's depiction of a treaty between Retief and the Zulu leader who kills him in Panel 13 imply that Retief's death was indeed a murder (Figure 6).[139] Moreover, Panel 11 (Figure 7) depicts the physical struggle of traveling over the rough terrain of the Drakensberg in order to escape British imperial rule.[140] These depictions, and others like it in the Historical Frieze, serve as "evidence of the price the Afrikaner paid for the right to call South Africa his fatherland."[141] Sacrifice, then, legitimizes their claim on South Africa. Daniel Herwitz, a U.S.-based scholar interested in visual art and architecture as well as contemporary culture and politics, elaborates the logic of sacrifice as a justification for national sovereignty through political and cultural studies discourse:

> Settler societies claim sovereignty on the basis of suffering at the hands of another, but also through the pain and triumph of settling itself. It is in and through the act of settling (in this case codified as the Great Trek) that the group believes itself purified, ennobled, and bonded with land. It is in and through the act that a settler society finds its origin, and destiny. Endlessly recited and enacted in ritual after the fact, the act eventually becomes magnified into something biblical. The act is (thus ennobled retrospectively) theirs, the thing that confers exclusive right if not ownership over land and peoples.[142]

The message that the Historical Frieze at the Voortrekker Monument tells, based on Herwitz' explanation, is that by way of struggling and suffering in the interior of South Africa during the Great Trek, the Voortrekkers justified their claim of the South African interior. By ethnically identifying with the Voortrekkers, whom the Voortrekker Monument portrays as having founded

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[138] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 47.

[139] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 47.

[140] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 46, 49.

[141] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 34.

[142] Daniel Herwitz, *Heritage, Culture, and Politics in the Postcolony* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2012), 99.

the South African nation, the Afrikaner people legitimize their rise to power in 1948 and the institution of the system of apartheid.

Moerdijk also draws on inspiration from ideas and motifs in Protestant Christianity to legitimize the Voortrekkers' claim to the South African interior. Ultimately, the monument projects the idea that the Voortrekkers is sovereign over the interior of South Africa because God willed it. Thus, Moerdijk designed the monument as an altar. Because the Voortrekkers had not yet developed a distinct style of monumental architecture at the time of the Voortrekker Monument's conception, Moerdijk looked to a Bible character who, like the Voortrekkers, had wandered as a sojourner: "Like Abraham, when he left Ur of the Chaldees to found a new state, he would have made his monument a religious one."[143] The altar, which is located in the Cenotaph Hall, is the central focal point of the monument. In fact, Moerdijk explains that "[t]he symbolic significance of the monument is explained to the visitor by considering the inside first and then working outwards, from the most important central point to the protecting buttress."[144] In other words, the meaning of the Voortrekker Monument originates at the altar.

The altar takes the form of a granite cenotaph and serves as the symbolic resting place for Piet Retief and those who were killed with him by King Dingaan during the Great Trek (Figure 8).[145] It is located within the 130 feet-squared basement. The top of the cenotaph is inscribed with the phrase, "Ons vir jou Suid-Afrika," which translate in English to "We for thee, South Africa." The words of the inscription are taken from the C.J. Langenhoven's poem, *Die Stem van*

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[143] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 32.

[144] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 32.

[145] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 32-33.

Suid-Afrika.[146] Every year at noon on December 16th, a beam of sunlight illuminates the inscription through an aperture in the dome of the Monument.

The sunbeam's annual occurrence on December 16th has numerous implications about the ways in which the Voortrekkers attributed victories during the Great Trek to God's favor. According to the wall plaque accompanying the element, the light, in its most basic meaning, "symbolizes God's blessing on the life and aspirations of the Voortrekkers."[147] The association of the light with blessings and the victory at the Battle of Blood River may allude to a meaning more problematic, however. Sarel Cilliers, a Voortrekker leader and preacher, stated in the vow on December 9th, 1838, a week before the Battle of Blood River:

> My brethren and fellow countrymen, at this moment we stand before the holy God of heaven and earth, to make a promise, if He will be with us and protect us, and deliver the enemy into our hands so that we may triumph over him, that we shall observe the day and the date as an anniversary in each year and a day of thanksgiving like the Sabbath, in His honour; and that we shall enjoin our children that they must take part with us in this, for a remembrance even for our posterity; and if anyone sees a difficulty in this, let him return from this place. For the honour of His name shall be joyfully exalted, and to Him the fame and the honour of the victory must be given.[148]

This vow indicates that the Voortrekkers solicited God's protection and deliverance for their future battles against indigenous populations. If they were to defeat their enemies, the Voortrekkers would attribute the wins to God's divine favor and sovereign will for them. Of course, the Voortrekkers did defeat the Zulu people at the Battle of Blood River a week later. Problematically, the Voortrekkers justified the killing of people and the taking of land as ordained and justified by God through the vow.

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[146] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 33.

[147] The Heritage Foundation. "Voortrekker Monument Official Online Tour." Pretoria: Pretoria, n.d., Plaque "CENOTAPH: THE CENOTAPH FORMS THE CENTRE OF THE MONUMENT." https://vtm.org.za/en/home/.

[148] Moerdijk, *Official Guide*, 5.

In any case, the Voortrekker Monument crystallizes an understanding of South Africa's past that begins with the Great Trek and legitimizes the Voortrekkers' victories during the Great Trek as God's will. Through the rise of the National Party in 1948, the Voortrekker Monument reminds the Afrikaner people that their power is legitimate because they ethnically identify with the individuals who laid claim to the South African interior and because they believed God was on their side.

Freedom Part as a Counterbalance

To some extent, the foundation myths of the two monuments coexist together. The Rainbow Nation foundation myth of Freedom Park is not necessarily corrective of the Great Trek foundation myth at the Voortrekker Monument. Dr. Serote, the head of the Freedom Park Trust at the time of its conception, "acknowledged that the placement of the site so close to 'the bastion of Afrikaner identity' has deep symbolic power. … [P]art of the decision to locate the park nearby was to 'accept the past and… marry the two and move both into the future.'"[149] In other words, Freedom Park tolerates the foundation myth of the Voortrekker Monument, accepts it as belonging to the past, and attempts to envision a shared future. Seen together, the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park populate the Pretorian landscape with two alternative foundation myths about the nation.

Competing with the Voortrekker Monument

The narrative of South Africa's past that Freedom Park tells, however, refutes that of the Voortrekker Monument by spanning back further in time than the Great Trek. According to the Freedom Park Trust, the country's origins date back 3.6 billion years ago when early life forms

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[149] Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory," 160

evolved into homo sapiens sapiens on the land that is now South Africa.[150] The //hapo Museum (Figure 9) within Freedom Park tells this version of the South African past. The museum was named after the Khoi proverb: "//hapo ge //hapo tama /haohasib dis tamas ka i bo," which translates to, "A dream is not a dream until it is shared by the entire community."[151] The name of the museum itself reflects stage three of the reconciliation process, a "Shared Future." The museum was built during the last phase of Freedom Park's construction and unites the elements of Freedom Park by telling a different perspective of the story of Africa, starting from 3.6 billion years ago. Although //hapo's exhibitions, wall texts, and other didactic materials are not viewable on the Freedom Park online tour, the Freedom Park Trust reportedly conceptualized the museum to cover eight historical periods: Earth, Ancestors, Peopling, Colonisation, Conquest and Resistance, Industrialization and Urbanization, Struggle for Liberation, and Nation Building.[152]

The Wall of Names at *S'Khumbuto*, one of the main features of Freedom Park, also records the conflicts that occurred during South African history, many of which predate the Great Trek of the 1830s and 40s (Figure 10). In the words of the Freedom Park website, the Wall of Names "bears testimony to the various conflicts that shaped present-day South Africa and remembers those who died in those struggles."[153] By listing the names of individuals who have been identified with various conflicts in South African history, the monument testifies to a past that extends further back than the Great Trek. The 697-meter-long wall displays the names of

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[150] Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park,* 4.; Freedom Park Trust, "Conceptual Framework Document," NCOT Education and Technology, Sports, Arts and Culture (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, November 12, 2012), https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/2007/.; Ngcebetsha, *The Role of Freedom Park*, 4.

[151] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Hapo, View 1.

[152] Oliphant, "Freedom Park and Postcolonial Monumentality," 310.

[153] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, "Wall of Names," Freedom Park - Default (Freedom Park), accessed March 12, 2021, https://www.freedompark.co.za/index.php/stay-informed/images-of-freedom-park/wall-of-names-gallery.html.

individuals whose lives were lost in eight South African conflicts: the Pre-Colonial Wars,

Slavery, the South African War, the Wars of Resistance, World War I, World War II, Genocide,

and the Liberation Struggle.[154] To date, the Wall of Names has included over 139,000 names[155]

Freedom Park also opposes the narrative of South Africa as the Voortrekker Monument

tells it by privileging indigenous knowledge systems. Dr. Mogege Mosimege of South Africa's

Department of Science and Technology defines indigenous knowledge systems as an uncodified,

unrecorded, and transmitted type of knowledge that is "embedded in local history and … ha[s]

survived for centuries although suppressed by apartheid and colonialism."[156] Indigenous

knowledge systems, as Dr. Mosimege, Dr. Serote, Dr. Ncbegetshca, and Professor Harriet

Ngubane, a Senior Researcher of the Freedom Park Trust, describes them include a wide variety

of fields; for example, indigenous knowledge systems comprise indigenous South African

philosophies like Ubuntu, or the mutual identification of people's humanity; cleansing and

healing ceremonies; indigenous beliefs about the afterlife; and indigenous spiritualities.[157]

According to Andries Oliphant, a cultural policy advisor who has worked for the South African

Department of Arts and Culture, the various events that Freedom Park narrates are "coated with

layers of indigenous cultural and knowledge systems integral to construction of a timeless

African identity."[158] Isivivane is a great example of this (Figure 11).

[154] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park,* (Salvokop, Pretoria, South Africa: Freedom Park Cultural Institution, 2011), Online tour, https://www.freedompark.co.za/virtual_tour/main/home.html.
[155] Freedom Park Cultural Insitution, *Freedom Park Celebrating 20th Anniversary*, *YouTube* (Freedom Park, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWWJw_eaV_8&t=91s&ab_channel=FreedomPark.
[156] Mogege Mosimege, "Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Briefing: PMG," Parliamentary Monitoring Group, August 13, 2002, https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/1682/.
[157] Freedom Park Trust, "An African Perspective on the Management of Life and Death and Its Implications for Nation Building and Reconciliation in South Africa," *An African Perspective on the Management of Life and Death and Its Implications for Nation Building and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Pretoria, South Africa: Glen Manor Office Park, 2004), https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive-files/an_african_perspective_on_the_management_of_life_and_death.pdf.
[158] Oliphant, "Freedom Park and Postcolonial Monumentality," 311.

Isivivane is one of the most sacred spaces within Freedom Park and embodies the ways in which indigenous forms of spirituality and religious beliefs have influenced the conceptualization of the monument. At the time of its conceptualization, the Freedom Park Trust wanted to include a place where cleansing and healing could occur.[159] *Isivivane* is the realization of that desire. In IsiZulu and IsiXhosa, Isivivane refers to a "spiritual resting place for those who played a part in the liberation struggle in South Africa."[160] It contains the *Lesaka*, or the mist that sprays from the ground, which envelops eleven boulders representative of the nine South African provinces, the national government, and the international community.[161] The boulders also represent burial sites, or the places at which spirits of deceased freedom fighters were laid to rest through the performance of Cleansing, Healing, and Return of Spirits ceremonies that took place before the boulders' final destination at *Isivivane*.[162] According to Ngubane, stones are not only important in burials in African culture, but the act of leaving one behind at a location unites the individual with that place, its nature, its spirits, and its people.[163] Moreover, the *Lekgotla* (Setswana, Sesotho, and Sesotho sa Lebowa) is a semi-circular seating area around the Umlahlankosi tree, where visitors can discuss matters beneath a tree, an arrangement evocative of the traditional African political system of justice under a tree.[164] Surrounding *Isivivane* are nine other Umlahlankosi trees, donated by each province. Branches of the trees serve as a medium to transport the spirits of the departed from the gravesite or place of death to the home

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[159] Graham Young and Piet Vosloo, "Isivivane, Freedom Park: A Critical Analysis of the Relationship between Commemoration, Meaning and Landscape Design in Post-Apartheid South Africa," *Acta Structilia* 27, no. 1 (June 29, 2020): 96, https://doi.org/10.18820/24150487/as27i1.4.

[160] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Isivivane.

[161] Young and Vosloo, "Isivivane," 100.

[162] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Isivivane.

[163] Young and Vosloo, "Isivivane," 100.

[164] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Isivivane.

of the deceased.[165] The branches also serve as the mediums through which the spirits of South African heroes and heroines have been brought to *Isivivane*.[166]

As *Isivivane* demonstrates, Freedom Park tells a perspective of South African history that diverges from the narrative told at the Voortrekker Monument, and in doing so articulates a perspective that apartheid silenced. Other elements of the monument like *Isivivane* function in a similar way. According to Oliphant and Murray, the liberation of the African voice resists oppressive white minority rule by unveiling and highlighting South Africa's black majority perspectives that it silenced before and during apartheid.[167]

Acquiescence

Through the collaboration of the managements of the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park, the construction of Reconciliation Road began in 2011. Reconciliation Road would be a pathway that would physically link the two monuments.[168] Duane Jethro, a scholar of cultural heritage and tourism studies at Humboldt University Berlin, conceives of the physical connection between the two monuments as representative of "the material coming together of two historically divided communities while also framing a tension of historical representation, of a black African history on one hill and a white Afrikaner history on the other."[169] Put this way, the Bback African history of Freedom Park levels and balances out the white Afrikaner history of the Voortrekker Monument.

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[165] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Isivivane.

[166] Freedom Park Cultural Institution, *Virtual Tour of Freedom Park*, Isivivane.

[167] Andries Oliphant, "Freedom Park and Postcolonial Monumentality," *Third Text* 27, no. 3 (May 2013): 303, https://doi.org/10.1080/09528822.2013.796202.

[168] South African Government Newsroom, "Freedom Park Reopens Reconciliation Road Linking with Voortrekker Monument," South African Government (Government of South Africa, March 1, 2016), https://www.gov.za/speeches/reconciliation-road-between-freedom-park-and-voortrekker-monument-re-opens-1-mar-2016-0000.

[169] Duane Jethro, "'Freedom Park, A Heritage Destination': Tour-Guiding and Visitor Experience at a Post-Apartheid Heritage Site," *Tourist Studies* 16, no. 4 (December 1, 2016): 452, https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797615618099.

During the latter portion of 2014, Reconciliation Road closed. In an April 2015 correspondence between an individual named Mr. M.W. Rabotapi and the South African Minister of Arts and Culture that the Parliamentary Monitoring Group published online, Rabotapi asked the Minister what the financial impact of the Road's closure was on both monuments. Apparently, the closure did not affect the number of visitors at the Voortrekker Monument, but it did have a detrimental impact on the numbers of people who visit Freedom Park, which led to budget pressures at the latter institution.[170] Insightfully, however, the Minister remarked in his answer about the kind of mutually enhancing and cooperative relationship that exists between the two monuments. The Minister stated: "It is an unfortunate development that the road that symbolizes reconciliation efforts is not operational. This is a serious setback as we were looking to forward a symbiotic and mutually enriching relationship between the Voortrekker Monument and Freedom Park."[171] Thus, although Freedom Park does challenge aspects of the Voortrekker Monument, it also cooperates with, tolerates, enhances and is enhanced by the Voortrekker Monument.

The inability for Freedom Park, in its conceptualization, to holistically counter the Voortrekker Monument in order to forward an official state reconciliation narrative is a weakness of Freedom Park. Freedom Park's acquiescence to the Voortrekker Monument hampers the post-apartheid monument's ability to take a firm oppositional stance toward the ideals the monumental granite monolith stands for: apartheid, racism, and white supremacy. In the next chapter, I elaborate on my critique of Freedom Park by analyzing the virtual tour of the Voortrekker Monument and what it signals about its contemporary aims and meanings

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[170] Minister of Arts and Culture, "Questions & Replies: Arts & Culture A," Parliamentary Monitoring Group (People's Assembly, March 17, 2015), https://pmg.org.za/question_reply/541/.

[171] Minister of Arts and Culture, "Questions & Replies: Arts & Culture A."

Chapter 2: Figures
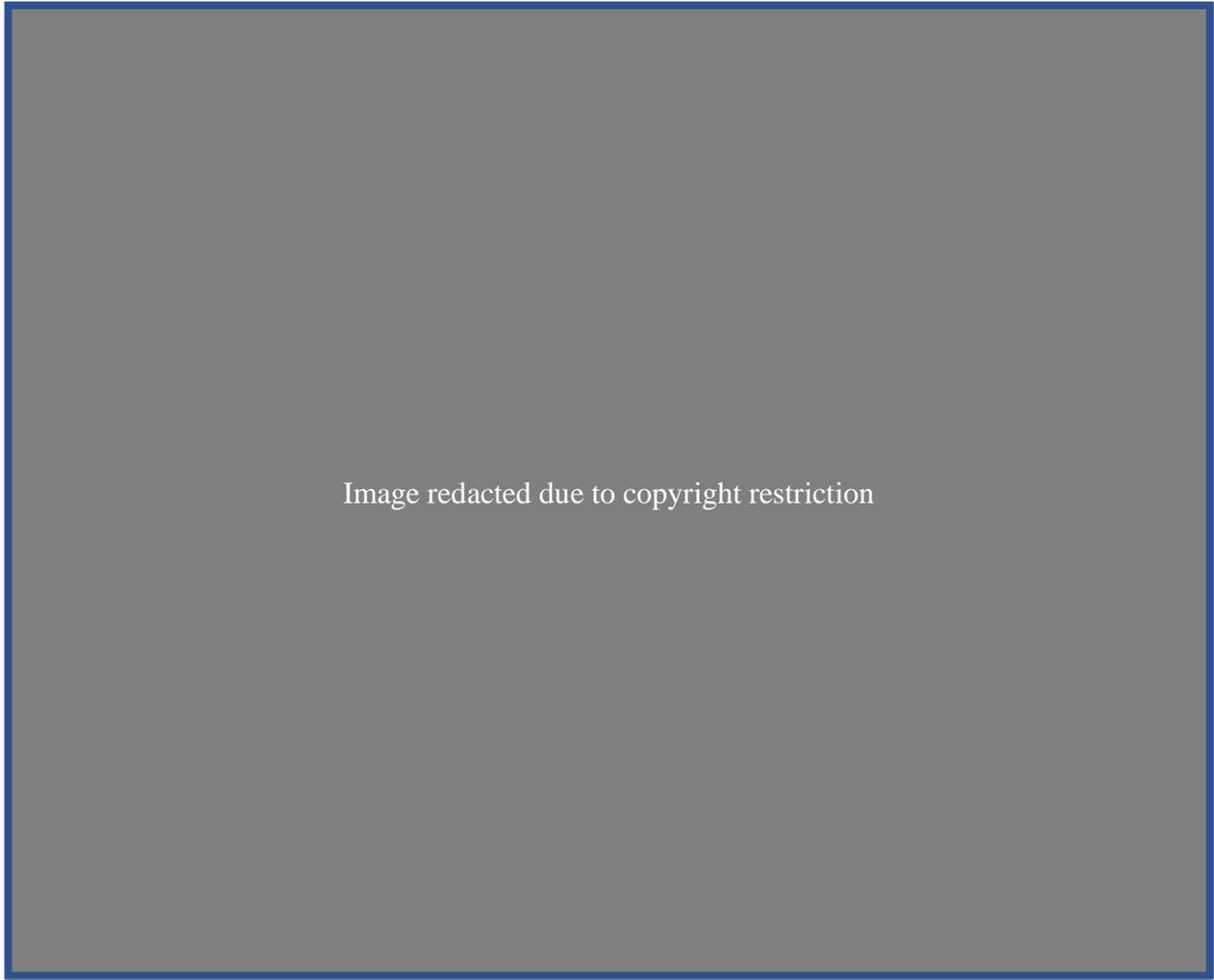
Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 5: Screenshot of Panel 13 viewable through the Voortrekker Monument's virtual tour. Matterport. 2017. Image removed due to copyright restriction.
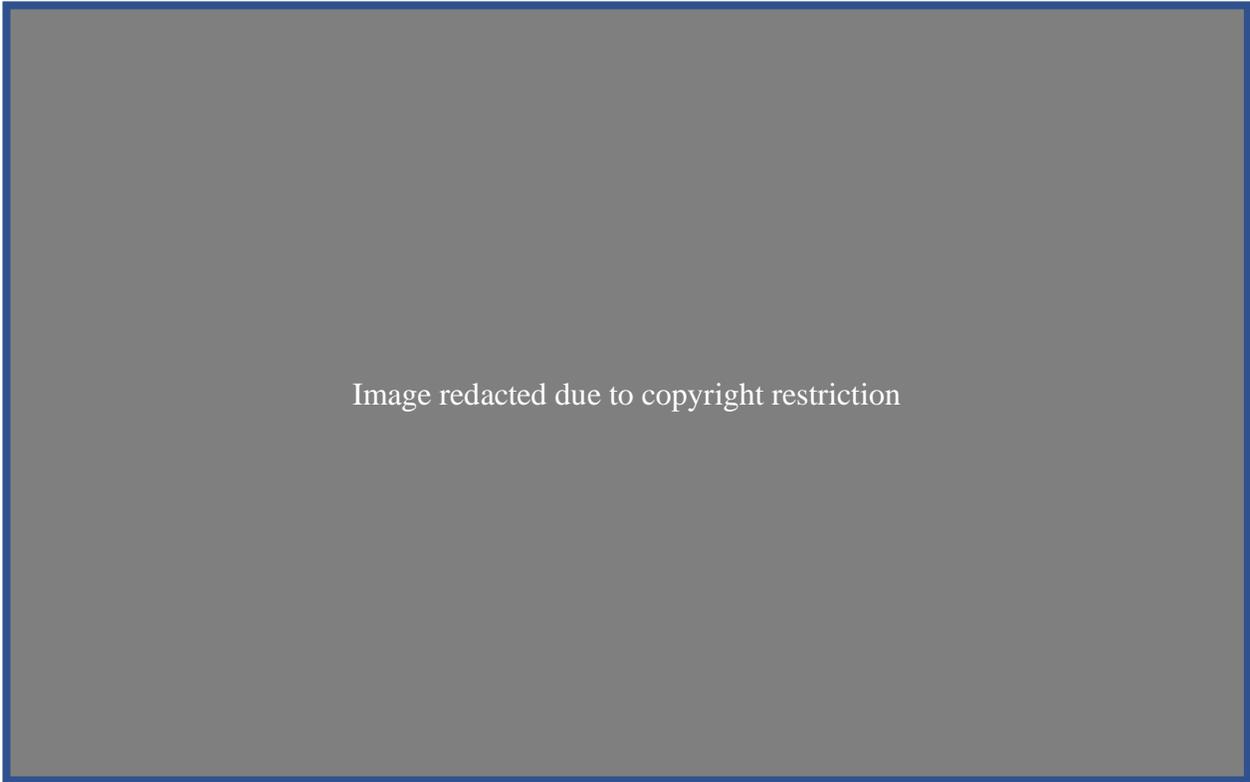
Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 6: Screenshot of Panel 12 viewable through the Voortrekker Monument's virtual tour. Matterport. 2017. Image removed due to copyright restriction.

Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 7: Screenshot of Panel 11 viewable through the Voortrekker Monument's virtual tour. Matterport. 2017. Image removed due to copyright restriction.

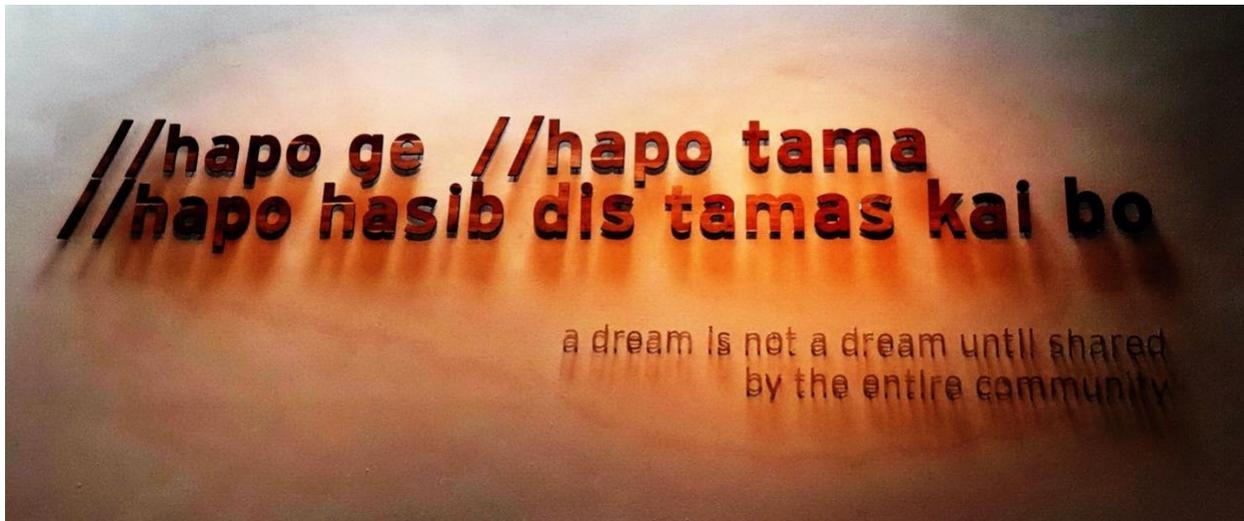Figure 8: Cenotaph at the Voortrekker Monument. Núria Pueyo. 2007. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/deed.en).

Figure 9: //hapo Museum Sign. Ian Cochrane. 2014. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 (CC BY 2.0) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/?ref=ccsearch&atype=rich).
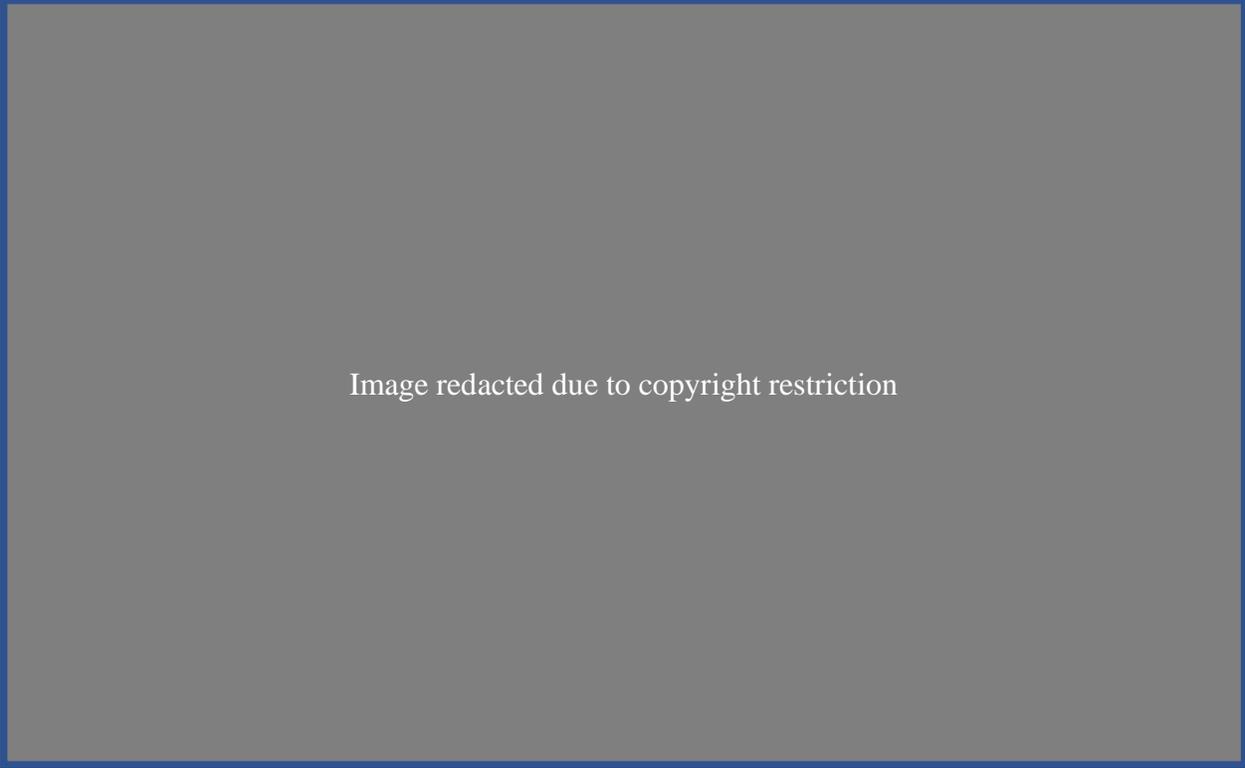
Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 10: Freedom Park. Photograph of the Wall of Names. N.d. Image removed due to
copyright restriction. Image viewable at
https://www.freedompark.co.za/images/galleries/Wall%20of%20names/names12.jpg.

Figure 11: Isivivane. keso. 2009. Licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.0 Generic (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0) License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.0/?ref=ccsearch&atype=rich).

Chapter 3: The Voortrekker Monument's New Life

After apartheid was legally abolished in 1994, questions circulated about what would become of the Voortrekker Monument. Opponents to apartheid offered three proposals: "(1) demolition and abandonment of the site; (2) recycling the bricks to build houses for the poor; and (3) refashioning the memorial into a public urinal for the black population" (*Mail and Guardian*, 2002)."[172] According to Robyn Autry, a sociologist on faculty at Wesleyan University, Voortrekker Monument stakeholders organized to preserve the site from destruction or alteration: "These defensive measures were designed to accommodate a changing national memorial landscape with new political leadership, a modified funding scheme for museums and memorials, staff changes and a burgeoning international tourist market."[173] In 2002, the Heritage Foundation, a "non-profit company," was established to preserve and conserve heritage objects, memorabilia, and sites of significance to Afrikaans-speaking South Africans.[174] It oversees the conservation and preservation of and also owns and manages the Voortrekker Monument.[175]

In 1999, after he was appointed as CEO of the Voortrekker Monument, Gert Opperman enforced a massive rebranding of the Voortrekker Monument "from a shrine into a more mundane museum of Afrikaner culture and history, 'a professional, hospitable organisation that welcomes everybody.'"[176] Moreover, Opperman invited President Nelson Mandela to the monument to present him an honor and hired black guides to provide tours in native

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[172] Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory," 153.

[173] Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory," 154.

[174] The Voortrekker Monument, "New Heritage Centre on the Voortrekker Monument Site in Pretoria," Heritage Centre (Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site), accessed March 13, 2021, http://vtm.org.za/en/heritage-centre/.

[175] The Heritage Foundation, "Programmes" (Die Erfenissentrum), accessed March 13, 2021, http://es.org.za/en/programmes/.

[176] Independent Online, "Voortrekker Monument Changes with the Times."

languages.[177] In keeping with Opperman's leadership aims, the site has gained new additions since its 1949 form, such as the Garden of Remembrance, a site at which interested individuals may purchase a niche to provide "a place of rest for [their] loved ones," as well as a gift shop and restaurants.[178] The expansion of available activities and visitor attractions—such as the Monument Running Club, cycling, running, and walking trails, and horse riding, to name a few—at the Voortrekker Monument have also contributed to the new life of the monument. Autry describes that the "distancing of the monument from its roots in the apartheid past … is primarily trained on environmental and cultural preservation," a superficial rebranding, yet the rhetoric of "threats" to a minority group's identity implies that black majority rule is still seen as dangerous.[179] Despite Opperman's explicit redefinition of the Voortrekker Monument, traces of its original racist and white supremacist aims peak through.

The privatization of the site, its marketing strategies, and contemporary expansions of the monument have altered the life of the Voortrekker Monument. For these reasons, the Voortrekker Monument persists as an architecturally impressive historical relic and ideologically neutral tourism site in South Africa, even as the formal and symbolic components in the grey granite monument have gone unchanged.[180] What was once a validating marker of the rise to Afrikaner power has become a sterile site tourism. In this chapter, I argue that the choice to utilize 3D photography software to power its online tour reflects the Voortrekker Monument's aim to sanitize itself of its former life as a symbol of apartheid to compete in South Africa's

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[177] Ravi Nessman, "Apartheid Memorial Takes On New Life," *Washington Post*, July 6, 2003, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2003/07/06/apartheid-memorial-takes-on-new-life/d4fb278f-567a-4c9c-8b59-f16af17430e9/.

[178] Voortrekker Monument Heritage Site, "Experience It," The Voortrekker Monument (https://vtm.org.za/en/home/, n.d.), accessed March 12, 2021.

[179] Autry, "The Monumental Reconstruction of Memory," 154.

[180] Grundlingh, "A Cultural Conundrum," 171,

tourism industry. The Voortrekker Monument's dynamism in terms of its meanings and aims is a feature of the monument in particular but all monuments broadly that Freedom Park fails to account for in its conceptualization, contributing to its weakness as a countermonument.

The Voortrekker Monument's online tour is made possible by Matterport, a virtual tour software program that creates 3D models of interior spaces that are immersive and highly detailed.[181] Businesses within the real estate, retail, insurance, architecture and construction, facilities management, and travel and hospitality industries utilize Matterport's software to promote themselves. For the Voortrekker Monument to opt for a virtual tour software that is designed to help businesses become "more competitive in their market" is telling of the Voortrekker Monument's desire to boost its tourism popularity.[182]

The technology of the Voortrekker Monument's official online tour allows virtual visitors to roam through space by double clicking their computer cursors on areas within the virtual space toward which they would like to move (Figure 12). On the official online tour, the zoom function allows for legible scrutiny of the information on every wall plaque and provides crisp images of the monument's interior (Figure 13). The higher resolution images on the tour allow for close scrutiny of architectural details and sculptures at the Voortrekker Monument. Furthermore, viewers virtually explore the monument against the background noise of triumphant, dramatic orchestral music.

Interestingly, after the Matterport software creates a 3D model of some property or site, it provides a tool for its client to upload the finalized virtual tour to Google Street View. This is likely how the Voortrekker Monument was able to gain Street View capabilities on Google

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[181] Matterport, "Why Matterport," Matterport (Matterport, Inc.), accessed March 13, 2021, https://matterport.com/why-matterport.
[182] Matterport, "Why Matterport."

Earth. Explorers of the Voortrekker Monument using Google Earth can virtually enter the monument. They can read the wall plaques, zoom into the marble frieze, pan across the Pretoria skyline, and explore in depth the Hall of Heroes, the Cenotaph Hall, and the basement-level museum. Virtual explorers can also move about the plazas surrounding the monument using navigation arrows (Figure 14) and "climb" up the stairs leading from the parking lots to the monument.

According to Albert Grundlingh, a Stellenbosch University Professor of History, marketing "the craftsmanship of the sculptures, the scale of the building, [and] the natural habitat surrounding the monument" as notable aspects of the Voortrekker Monument has effectively attracted foreign visitors who are unconcerned about the historical origins of the Voortrekker Monument.[183] Virtual exploration of the monument on both the online tour and Google Earth also allow a person to zoom into and focus on the formal features of the monument. Therefore, even in its virtual dimension, the Voortrekker Monument may foster the depoliticization of its history fraught with racism and apartheid by utilizing platforms that enable virtual visitors to view in detail the craftsmanship of the architecture, reliefs, and statues in and around the Voortrekker Monument.

Virtual portrayals of the Voortrekker Monument on its official online tour and Google Earth Street View tour allow visitors to explore the monument with the feeling of empowerment. According to Aaron Shapiro, a scholar of Communication Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "'[v]irtual explorers' on Street View can toggle the camera perspective, zoom in and out, and move up and down a street," giving users the impressions of freedom, choice, and agency with the extent and depth with which they can explore and navigate the

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[183] Grundlingh, "A Cultural Conundrum," 173.

maps.[184] Associate Professor of Media Studies, Micky Lee, at Suffolk University elaborates on this idea: he states that Google's suite of mapping software is "painted as merely a tool that users adopt to empower themselves."[185] Google Earth and Maps gives the impression that it is the privilege of the user to manipulate the image data available on Google Earth and Maps and that the content of Google Earth is raw and objective. The result of this kind of virtual encounter may be the perception of transparency, even as it deliberately avoids touching on its racist history. Especially because the language through which the Voortrekker Monument conveys its message of Afrikaner nationalism is symbolic and not directly addressed through wall plaques, the virtual visitor to either the Google or official online tour may not directly confront the monument's relationship to the history of apartheid in the virtual tours.

The modes for virtually touring the Voortrekker Monument contrast from that of Freedom Park. At Freedom Park, there are no Street View capabilities for virtual explorers to enter the monument on Google Earth. The official online tour is formatted like a website with tabs containing images and descriptions of the various elements within the monument. Images on this tour are either static photographs or panoramic ones that provide 360-degree views of fixed locations at Freedom Park. The online official tour is highly didactic and helps certain visitors who are unaware of the symbolic meanings of the Freedom Park to understand the meanings and functions of the elements. I mention Freedom Park's tour by way of pointing out that Street View-style modes of navigation for online tours are not necessarily the strongest from a didactic standpoint, especially for the Voortrekker Monument whose language of symbolism is not easily

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[184] Aaron Shapiro, "Street-Level: Google Street View's Abstraction by Datafication," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 3 (March 1, 2018): 1204, https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816687293.

[185] Micky Lee, "A Political Economic Critique of Google Maps and Google Earth," *Information, Communication & Society* 13, no. 6 (September 1, 2010): pp. 909-928, https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180903456520.

legible for all visitors. Teaching viewers about its symbolic meanings, however, is not the Voortrekker Monument's aim and may in fact harm the monument's reputation.

The high-power zoom and roaming capabilities that the Voortrekker Monument allows for in its official online tour are highly effective at grabbing virtual explorers' attention. Michael Cooper, the Deputy Culture Editor at the New York Times, reported in a 2015 article about Google Cultural Institute that the high-power zoom and virtual tour publishing capabilities on Google Arts and Culture, a platform that publishes online tours and art from the world's top institutions, are powerful tools to attract and keep users' attention. When Google Arts & Culture expanded to feature performance halls like Carnegie Hall in New York on its platform, Mr. Sood, the head of the Google project stated that, "'We look at it from a fishing standpoint,' … 'The hook, for most people, seems to be the zoom and the virtual tours. But what surprised me is that when they get exposed to an exhibition, you'd be surprised to know that people actually spend time there, reading it.'"[187] Clearly, the zoom and virtual tour functions are incredibly effective at drawing Google users into the institutions that publish their content on the platform. Similarly, the zoom and virtual tour functions on the official online tour at the Voortrekker Monument and Google Earth may effectively draw in both virtual and in-person visitors. The Voortrekker Monument's usage of an online tour that can allow virtual viewers of the monument to see the interior in such high-detail reflects the monument's efforts to distract visitors from its problematic past. Its usage of a "hook"-like online tour software also reflects its aims to attract people, to stay competitive in the virtual realm of tourism.

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[187] Michael Cooper, "Google Cultural Institute Puts Us All Onstage," Music (The New York Times, December 1, 2015), https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/02/arts/music/google-cultural-institute-puts-us-all-onstage.html.

In-Person Tourism at the Voortrekker Monument

       In terms of in-person visitors to each monument, the Voortrekker Monument surpasses Freedom Park. According to Jethro, Freedom Park attracted 23,000 visitors in 2013 when the site became fully operational, a number that pales in comparison to his estimation of the number of annual visitors to the Voortrekker Monument—around 350,000 people, of whom roughly 43% are international tourists.[188] Furthermore, guidebooks have been translated into numerous languages such as German, French, Portuguese, Chinese, Spanish, Afrikaans, English, and Italian, revealing the international market for tourists at the Voortrekker Monument.[189] While the visitor numbers indicate that the Voortrekker Monument is more popular, casual virtual or in-person visitors to the Voortrekker Monument, may not consider the ways in which privatization, commercialization, and aggressive rebranding and marketing strategies at the Voortrekker Monument play into its greater popularity.

       Examining the Voortrekker Monument's online tour not only sheds light on the depoliticizing aims of the Voortrekker Monument, but also reflects its contemporary priorities of staying competitive in the tourism industry. In conceptualizing Freedom Park as a monument that corresponds to and counters the Voortrekker Monument, the Freedom Park Trust failed to accommodate for the ways in which the Voortrekker Monument could rebrand itself. To counter a monument that has itself altered its contemporary meaning is a difficult task, one which Freedom Park in its conceptualization and component parts do not address.

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[188] Jethro, "'Freedom Park, A Heritage Destination,'" 456.

[189] Grundlingh, "A Cultural Conundrum," 172.

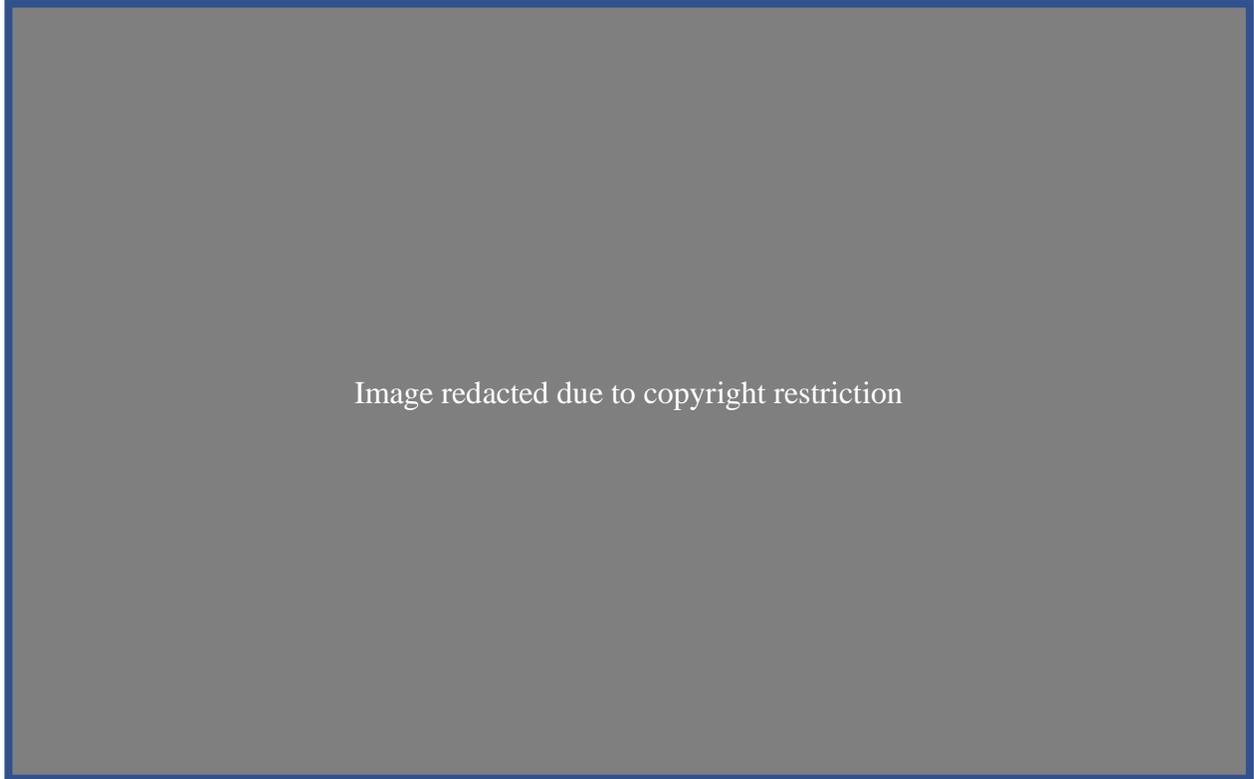**Chapter 3: Figures**

Image redacted due to copyright restriction

Figure 12: Screenshot of the Voortrekker Monument's official online tour. Matterport. 2017. Image removed due to copyright restriction.

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Figure 13: Screenshot of a virtual representation of a wall plaque in the Voortrekker Monument's online tour. Matterport. 2017. Image removed due to copyright restriction.

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Figure 14: Screenshot of the navigation arrows in Google Earth. Schalk Meyer. N.d. Image removed due to copyright restriction. Image viewable at <iframe src="https://www.google.com/maps/embed?pb=!4v1618261356990!6m8!1m7!1sCAoSLEFGM VFpcFAwMTZzT3ItNlAyWk53emZnNmpnSnVzX3gySnAyYm9kTTNzYVd3!2m2!1d-25.7764712!2d28.1757818!3f185.82275!4f-0.24254999999999427!5f0.7820865974627469" width="600" height="450" style="border:0;" allowfullscreen="" loading="lazy"></iframe>.

Conclusion

Freedom Park embodies one way that people in South Africa have conceptualized democratic society through material forms. For the individuals in the Freedom Park Trust who conceptualized Freedom Park, telling a different version of the South African past than the Voortrekker Monument and prioritizing African indigenous materiality, aesthetics, philosophies, and religious beliefs gives voice to those whom apartheid silenced. This directly opposes the neighboring Voortrekker Monument's understanding of the past, which is told through the lens of Afrikaners. Moreover, the creation of Freedom Park allowed the South African government to push its reconciliation agenda in the immediate years after apartheid. However, because of its internal, conceptual inconsistencies and its inability to account for the dynamism of the Voortrekker Monument, Freedom Park also fails to completely reject the racist and white supremacist ideas that informed the construction of the Voortrekker Monument.

My critique of Freedom Park is not to say that the monument is ineffective, but rather to illuminate the ways in which conceptualizing innovative and just monuments can be challenging for countries whose commemorative landscapes contain problematic monuments. Artists confronted this difficulty in the 1980s when they created countermonumental memorials in honor of Holocaust victims in Germany. In the United States, too, the country's reckoning with race issues and white supremacy is not just a systemic one but a physical, material one. To design monuments that counter existing ones, give voice to marginalized people, and resist immutability, permanence, and rigidity, society needs artists of diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and identities to envision new monuments innovatively and creatively, with nuanced thought and ingenuity.

At a more granular level, the challenge of creating effective monuments is also pertinent to the Emory community. As of October 2020, President Fenves restored the Task Force on Untold Stories and Disenfranchised Populations, the committees of which have been charged with developing a report with recommendations for commemorating the Indigenous peoples whose land Emory occupies today, creating scholarships for individuals whose ascendants contributed to Emory's operations and founding through their labor, broadening the available courses on Indigenous populations and slavery, and honoring the enslaved persons who physically built Emory College.[191] Designing and realizing physical markers that commemorate Native Americans and acknowledge Emory's history with indigenous peoples is a key component of the Task Force's subordinate group, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative Ad Hoc Committee. With the report finalized and submitted to President Fenves this April 2021, we can only hope that the Emory administration can enact the recommendations, which reckon with the institution's physical landscape and internal systems.

The Voortrekker Monument's changing aims and meanings may also recall the depoliticization of Atlanta's Stone Mountain, proposed in 1915 and finished in 1972. The monument has transformed from being the site at which the second resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan took place in 1915 to being a contemporary tourism attraction.[192] At Stone Mountain today, visitors can partake in activities like hiking, miniature golf, watching a film at the movie theater,

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[191] Emory University, "Task Force on Untold Stories and Disenfranchised Populations: Office of the President: Emory University," Office of the President | Emory University (Emory University, April 1, 2021), https://president.emory.edu/advisory-committees/untold-stories-disenfranchised-populations.html.
[192] Lorraine Boissoneault, "What Will Happen to Stone Mountain, America's Largest Confederate Memorial?," Smithsonian.com (Smithsonian Institution, August 22, 2017), https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/what-will-happen-stone-mountain-americas-largest-confederate-memorial-180964588/.

and viewing antebellum memorabilia, not unlike the ways in which the Voortrekker Monument has also shifted its focus away from its problematic aspects toward its amenities and activities.[193]

Considering the different national histories into which they fit, the Voortrekker Monument and Stone Mountain are not equivalents. However, the contemporary politics behind both monuments reflect the broader debate about which—and whose—histories, ideals, and values are materially preserved in public spaces. Freedom Park's inability to fully respond to and wholly address the ways in which the Voortrekker Monument silences marginalized populations within the South African nation and narrates racist and white supremacist versions of the past only underscores the challenge that groups face today in reconciling with problematic monuments. These discussions matter not just on an intellectual level, but on personal ones, as racist and white supremacist monuments can propagandize, mislead, indoctrinate, traumatize, and hurt the individuals comprising its public. As such, it will be increasingly important to view the changing monumental and memorial landscapes of South Africa, the United States, and other nations through critical lenses.

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[193] Lorraine Boissoneault, "What Will Happen to Stone Mountain."

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