Towards an Archive of Freedom (Cape Town, 28 - 29 Oct 15)

University of Cape Town, Oct 28–29, 2015

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Over the past few years there has been what has been called the “archival turn.” Since the 1990s after Jacques Derrida’s Archive Fever, the question of the archive has been theoretically debated with a focus on practices of reading, the relationship of the archive to power and the gaps within the archive. But what of the archive within the context of colonial and racial domination? Ann Stoler has noted that the Dutch colonial archives serve less “as stories of for a colonial history than as active, generative substances with histories as documents with itineraries of their own. “Yet we need to ask, given the context of colonial and various forms of racial power, in what other ways can we consider the archive? In what other ways can we trouble the notion of archive itself?

In his 1994 paper, Derrida presented an argument in which the official documents were stored in archon, the residence of a magistrate who then had the right to interpret them for reasons of the law. Within the colonial context, archives were created by the powerful to produce both social categories and modes of thought. The colonial archive represents bodies of ideas about colonized people and as such there have been an arguments for reading this archive “against the grain.” Yet this rich theoretical discussion elides what Anthony Bogues has called the “archive of the ordinary,” and a sense that the interpretation of all archives might turn around questions of representation and ways of reimagining a past. We need to ask: what are the ways in which we can do this when the archives are not those constructed by colonial and racial power but by the subaltern, the colonized? How do we rethink archives when the material we are interested in has never been consigned? Is the body an archive, if so on what terms? Can the family photograph be an archive and in what ways? What is the relationship to archive and memory when the writing of histories seeks to displace
the memory of them? These are some of the questions with which this workshop will engage, using these questions as an entry point to consider contemporary issues of the visual, memory and representation.

Wednesday, 28 October 2015
The Centre for African Studies Gallery, Upper Campus, UCT

17h00 . 17h30 Keynote address: ‘Archiving Resistance: School Photos in Nazi-occupied Europe’ by Professor Leo Spitzer, Dartmouth College

18h00 . 19h30 Exhibition opening: ‘Returned to Harfield’ by David Brown

Thursday, 29th October 2015

Hiddingh Hall, Michaelis School of Fine Art, 31 Orange Street, Cape Town

09h00 . 09h10 Introduction and welcome: Dr Siona O'Connell (UCT)

09h10 . 09h55 Keynote address by Professor Marianne Hirsch (Columbia)

09h55 . 10h15 M**ovie Snaps** (documentary) Dr Siona O'Connell (UCT)

10h15 . 10h35 Candice Jansen (Wits)

10h35 . 11h00 Discussion lead by Ruth Sack

11h00 . 11h15 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

11h15 . 12h05 Kurt Campbell (UCT)

12h05 . 12h35 Professor Jonathan Highfield (RISD)

12h35 . 13h00 Discussion lead by Dr Roderick Sauls

13h00 . 13h45 LUNCH

13h45 . 14h05 Stephen Symons (UCT)

14h05 . 14h25 Svea Josephy (UCT)

14h25 . 14h45 Professor Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz (UCT)

14h40 . 15h00 Professor Pippa Skotnes (UCT)

15h00 . 15h15 TEA/COFFEE BREAK

15h00 . 15h45 Closing Keynote address by Professor Anthony Bogues (Brown)

19h00 Baxter Theatre
Premiere of An Impossible Return and The Wynberg 7

Reference:
CONF: Towards an Archive of Freedom (Cape Town, 28 - 29 Oct 15). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 16, 2015 (accessed Nov 12, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/11253>.